



## SPORTS SWING STING

- DR. SAROON BENJAMIN ODISHO -

- ▶ **IF YOUR ELBOW EATS IN BEFORE THE EIGHTEENTH OR YOU KEEP LOSING TO THE GUY WITH MATCHING SWEAT BANDS TO HIS OUTFIT BECAUSE OF YOUR BROKE BACKHAND, THEN IT MIGHT BE TIME TO GET THAT ELBOW CHECKED OUT. NOT ONLY FOR YOUR SELF ESTEEM, BUT MOST COMMON ELBOW SPORTS INJURIES ARE EASILY TREATED IF ADDRESSED AND CORRECTED EARLY. ASIDE FROM DIGGING EIGHTEEN OF THE DEEPEST DIVOTS EVER OR THE OCCASIONAL FAILED ATTEMPT TO CLEAR THE NET DURING A GAME WINNING HURDLE, ELBOW SPORTS INJURIES ARE THE RESULT OF REPETITIVE INSULTS OF THIS VULNERABLE HINGED JOINT. NON-INVASIVE ALTERNATIVE CARE, SOME PHYSICAL THERAPY, AND A REPEAT OF SPORTS BIOMECHANICS CAN GET YOU BACK INTO THE SWING OF SUMMER'S MOST POPULAR ACTIVITIES.**

CTS results from excessive pressure placed on the median nerve by other structures as they pass through the carpal tunnel (made up of carpal bones and a tough circular fibrous band of tissue at the wrist). Pressure usually arises from swelling of the surrounding soft tissue or poor circulation (as also seen in certain conditions like diabetes, obesity, and other glandular or metabolic ailments) or history of trauma (old fractures or dislocations). The swelling of these tissues decreases the amount of room in the tunnel and therefore squeezes the median nerve. Squeezed nerve equals pain. Other symptoms characteristic of CTS include numbness, tingling, and/or loss of grip in the palm and thumb-middle/ring fingers. Since the nerve supplying the ring-pinky fingers doesn't pass through the carpal tunnel, pain here is usually the result of a musculoskeletal issue further up the arm. CTS patients might also complain of pain shooting up the arm to elbow, but again this is likely due to issues stemming from an impingement anywhere from the neck down the arm.

The fix is easy: alleviate the swelling and manage the activities that cause the pain. Ultrasound, muscle stimulation, acupuncture, and/or kinesiotaping are all very effective treatments for CTS. These treatments help reduce swelling and pain in the wrist. For some patients, diet and nutrition can also help alleviate the swelling due to poor circulation or hydration (especially important for pregnant women who are more vulnerable to CTS). Next, fix the culprit. Depending on the sport or workplace, little changes in equipment or workstation can make a world of difference to your wrists. Work site ergonomics, sport swing re-training, or even changing the equipment you use are also a vital part my treatment protocol. Useful information that will prevent patients from re-injuring their wrists.

Although not a fix, splinting can also be utilized to manage the pain. Patients should only use wrist splints when performing strenuous wrist activities or at night. Reason being is looping an elastic strap over your wrists for a long period of time, which are already swollen to begin with, only adds to the problem.

Only severe cases or patients with a history of previous wrist traumas (like fractures, or failure of previous conservative treatments) should warrant a surgical consult. CTS takes some time to heal so patients that require a return to activities immediately (if you're either a competitive athlete or you used up your last sick day for the Cubs opener) should ask their healthcare provider about the following treatment options. Steroid injections into the wrist may bring quick relief from pain, but it's often temporary. Surgery for CTS involves releasing the pressure in the carpal tunnel by cutting and lowering the fibrous band. Again, quick relief but the long term success of this treatment versus a more natural approach is a little hazy at best. These treatments will get you back in the swing of things but are not likely to make the problem go away. These precautions and a little TLC will get your pain-free wrists back to work, sports, or whatever in no time.



Finally, some trendy advice for those of you shaking your wrists out while turning the pages of this magazine. Stretch your wrists. Two easy stretches include puffing your hands together like your praying and bringing your elbows out until your forearms are parallel with the ground, and doing the same with the back of your hands (reverse praying hands). Heat wrists before activities and ice after (20 minutes at a time). Finally, it wouldn't hurt to drink more water.

You hit the back nine-I'll hit the bar.

**Dr. Sargon Benjamin Odisho**