

FACT SHEET: Wrist Injuries

Prevention and Treatment



With the ever present change of technology, our wrists endure more stress and repetition. According to the 2020 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, hand and wrists injuries are the second most common occupational injury (second to back injuries). Like most musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), if left untreated, these injuries can become debilitating. Fortunately, there are ways to prevent wrist injuries.

NEED TO KNOW:

1. Whenever possible, work with a neutral (straight) wrist posture.
2. Distribute loads between both hands.
3. Recognize symptoms early and treat immediately.
4. Ice is effective in reducing inflammation and swelling.
5. If you work on a computer, complete the [Ergonomic Self-Assessment](#) to assess your work posture.

COMMON TYPES OF WRIST INJURIES:

- **Wrist Joint Sprain:** Due to large forces applied to wrist when wrist is in awkward position, or when wrist is extended. (i.e., falling on an extended wrist).
- **Tendonitis:** Inflammation of tendon. Occurs if tendon is used excessively, especially when wrist is in an awkward position (i.e., excessive typing or mouse use in an awkward wrist posture). If left untreated, inflammation can spread along tendon sheaths resulting in pain in forearm and/or hand.
- **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS):** Occurs when the median nerve is compressed in the carpal tunnel, a narrow passageway in the palm side of wrist (i.e., typing with awkward posture and/or contact stress exposure, resting wrists on a hard surface, while typing). Typical symptoms are pain, tingling and/or numbness in portions of the wrist and hand.

COMMON TYPES OF WRIST INJURIES:

- Avoid large forces to the wrist especially when the wrist is extended. Use two hands to lift, pull, or push which will distribute the load on the wrists.
- Maintain neutral (straight) wrist posture during activities. Avoid working in excessive wrist flexion or extension.
- Avoid contact stress exposure. This occurs when a body part comes in contact with a hard or sharp object, such as resting the wrist against a hard surface as in (Figures 1 & 2). Contact stress concentrates force on underlying tissues and interferes with normal blood flow and nerve function.
- Rotate between activities to alter type of stresses applied to wrists.
- Avoid wrist extension at night while sleeping. Sleep on your back to avoid nerve compression in arms. Consider wearing night wrist splints to maintain neutral posture while sleeping.



Figure 1: Incorrect

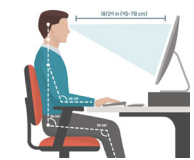


Figure 2: Correct

TREATMENT FOR LOWER BACK DISCOMFORT:

- **Rest:** Avoid aggravating activities. Adequate recovery time is needed to allow the tissues to heal and rebuild themselves.
- **Ice:** Apply to wrist for 15 minutes every 1-2 hours to reduce pain and swelling. Avoid using heat for the first 48 hours of an acute injury.
- **Medication:** Your doctor may prescribe NSAIDs anti-inflammatory medication (e.g., Aspirin, Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen or Naproxen Sodium).
- **Extension Stretches:** Extend arm in front while pointing the fingers toward the sky. With the other hand, gently bend the wrist farther until a mild to moderate stretch is felt in the forearm (Figure 3).
- **Splint:** Wear a splint to prevent flexion and extension during activities and/or sleeping.
- **Contact** your Healthcare Provider if symptoms persist after 2-3 days.

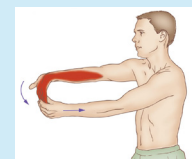


Figure 3

MORE INFO:



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- NIH MedlinePlus: [Wrist Injuries and Disorders](#)
- Mayo Clinic: [Wrist Pain Symptoms & Causes](#)