

8. **One of the most important preventive measures is variety.** In other words, change posture and activities often. If possible, take breaks before getting tired. Extremely short breaks can be very helpful if frequent enough. A "break" doesn't have to be a rest break – it simply can involve doing something else for a while.

9. **Don't follow CTD prevention rules without looking for consequences.** Some fixes have a drawback. Some ergonomic rules have a downside that possibly can make matters worse rather than better. The best way to evaluate ergonomic fixes is by considering all the risk factors described above in #2. Example: certain wrist splints may force a straighter wrist (vertically) but may put too much pressure on the underside of the wrist or make the individual fight against the splint causing more joint stress.

10. **Total CTD prevention involves ergonomics** (changing the environment), **ergonomics education** (changing work styles or habits), **medical management** (optimizing treatments and return-to-work procedures), and **management** (monitoring statistics to find the most hazardous jobs and working proactively). **Exercise and/or stretching** should also be incorporated for joint protection. CTDs usually cannot be adequately dealt with without all five approaches happening together.

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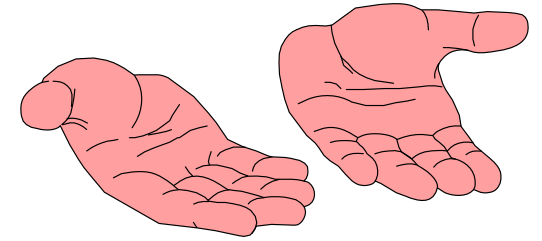
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10 Things You Should Know About Hand and Wrist Pain

Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTDs)



1. There are many kinds of CTD medical conditions that have ergonomic causes among office workers, including carpal tunnel syndrome and various kinds of tendon inflammation. **Because of the complexity and subtle differences between disorders, diagnosing CTDs correctly is not easy.** The most knowledgeable medical specialists for CTDs are generally considered to be physiatrists, or physical medicine specialists.

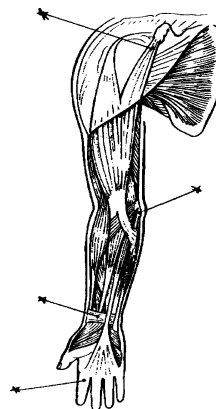
2. **CTDs can happen even if there is very little repetitive work.**

Besides repetition, **other possible causes** include:

- **Holding one position.** Muscles that hold a body part in position for long periods are more prone to stress than muscles that move a body part around.
- **Non-neutral positions.** Any position significantly different from neutral is considered to be at risk for musculoskeletal distress. Neutral is considered to be the position about halfway through the available range of motion for the joint.
- **Localized pressure.** Direct pressure on nerves or tendons can cause damage in the long run. The wrist is one location of concern. The elbow (the funny-bone or crazy-bone nerve) is another.
- **Use of force.** Even small forces can cause stress if small muscles are involved.
- **Sudden, fast motions involving a jerk or snap.**
- **Cold temperatures.**
- **Vibration,** as with hand-held power tools or whole-body vibration as caused by driving heavy equipment

3. Keeping these causes in mind, some **rules for preventing CTDs are:**

- **Break up repetitive work.**
- **Relax.** Don't use your muscles to hold your hands or shoulders in a particular position. Keep your limbs and shoulders at rest as much as possible.
- Use moderate postures for individual joints. **Stay away from positions near the extremes of your joints' range of motion.** The most neutral joint position is about halfway.
- **Minimize contact with hard, sharp or small surfaces.** This is especially important at the wrists and elbows.
- **Don't use too much force.** Notice any exertions you have to make and see if they can be eliminated. "Exertions" don't have to involve breaking into a sweat. They can be subtle, such as pulling a hard-to-reach drawer or lifting a heavy file.
- **Move with an even motion.** Avoid snapping the wrist or jerking against outside forces.
- **Keep your hands and fingers warm.** Consider gloves or even fingerless gloves.
- **Break up exposures to vibration.**



Common areas of stress and pain with CTDs

4. **"Fitting the physical workspace to the worker" is often touted as the best way to prevent CTD.** This is an incomplete view. Although physical workstation design, physical tool design, and adjustability are important, **there are many other work-related factors.** Three less tangible but extremely important factors are job design (infrequent or inflexible breaks), stress control (deadlines and bad management), and individual work style (force use with typing, how the individual holds his/her wrists, and where the individual places the mouse).

5. **Most CTDs are preventable and curable if caught early.** The key is to notice trouble when it starts, and do something about it. Early signs may include pain, tingling, numbness, burning, or aching that does not go away by the next morning. Persistent symptoms may indicate nerve damage. Drastic cures, such as surgery, may not always be reliable and should be considered as a last resort. A health professional should be consulted when you are concerned about possible early signs.

6. **Some people get CTDs because their bodies are vulnerable to them.** For example, carpal tunnel syndrome seems to be related to diabetes, overweight, thyroid conditions, hormone conditions (such as those caused by hysterectomy or removal of both ovaries), rheumatoid arthritis, previous injuries, and other conditions. Smoking also may increase the risk of CTDs.

7. **CTDs can happen because of nonwork activities.** Hobbies, sports, driving, and even sleeping positions can contribute to them. Any attempts at treatment or prevention should include a look at off-the-job factors.