

# Avoiding Carpal Tunnel and Tendinitis

A lot of us learn to play harp without the aid of a teacher, because we're so anxious to play! We waited soooo long for this moment and we want magic! It's difficult in this microwave age to be patient!! We can slave over a hot microwave for 5 minutes to make dinner and we wonder if there is anything quicker! **Warming up is essential** to playing any instrument. Athletes don't play without a warmup, and we are musical athletes !!

You may not be "prone" to repetitive problems, but if you start with good hand technique - you will lessen your chances. Remember if there is any pain - stop playing and evaluate, how you're are sitting, holding your head, any hand glitches.....

**TENDINITIS:** When you feel pain at certain points on your elbow or wrist area, this is where "tearing" of the tendons has occurred (very small tearing though!) The **muscle is so tight that its tension rolls over to the tendon** attached to the bone and very small tears appear - which your body experiences as inflammation and pain

**CARPAL TUNNEL:** The carpal tunnel is a bony cavity in the center of your wrist and palm through which your nerves and tendons extend to the hand. When you do repetitive motion, the **excess strain causes tendons to swell** and press on the main nerve of the hand, in the center of your palm. This irritation of the nerve results in numbness in the hands and wrist, specifically the thumb and forefinger.

## ***You can prevent Carpal tunnel or Tendinitis before it occurs!***

When I experience a flare up of tendinitis symptoms, I have adopted the following ritual:

- First I use a **hydrocolater pad** (from the "Better Back" stores). The moist heat, helps loosen my tight muscles. I wrap my arms in the pad for 20 minutes
- **Then I stretch!** Arms, back, neck, hands, fingers. I do this regularly - every day to every other day. (Take yoga !) This keeps me flexible !

*If we don't change the direction we're going, we're likely to end up where we're headed.  
Chinese Proverb*

- I call for a **massage or trigger point therapy** appointment! Acupuncture helps too! Absolutely a must!!
- I soak my arms/hands in **alternating hot water then cold water**. (I use Epsom salts in the hot water) 20 minutes. Baths help relax the whole body!
- Then I **apply ice** to the sore areas
- Before I go to sleep I wear **wrist braces** and take 200 to 300 mg of **Ibuprofen**
- Then I **rest!** Sometimes When sleeping, I use a pillow to align my elbow so when I lay on my side, my wrist is not at a 90 degree angle against the bed!

When I do this ritual in this order, many times any inflammation has cleared up quickly. I found if I left out a step, it wouldn't work as well. I check my hand, neck, arm and back position at the harp and computer terminal. Adjusting my sitting position is very important!

NOTE: If pain persists check with a doctor who is familiar with sport or work related injuries. This is not to be medical advice. **Take every precaution!** Generally it will take up to 6 weeks for tendon tears to heal, *only* if all procedures are followed. **\*No claims can be made for these products. The author cannot be responsible for any misuse of these items. Please read directions for products carefully!**

- Rub on **Tiger Balm\*** ointment or **Arnica\*** salve to relieve tired muscles.
- **Glucosamine, Chondroitin and/or MSM\*** supplements are helpful in providing a build up of synodical fluid between the joints, so less friction & less wear between the bones takes place.
- A herbal supplement called **Cox2 Tame** is available over the counter at vitamin stores. It helps with inflammation
- Buy a "**hydrocolater pad**" at the Better Back stores! Moist heat relieves overworked muscles.
- Check **magnesium + calcium** levels - these vitamins help muscles relax.

## BOOKS

- *Carpel Tunnel Syndrome - Prevention and Treatment* by Kate Montgomery
- *Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Repetitive Stress Injuries: The Comprehensive Guide to Prevention, Treatment and Recovery* by Tammy Crouch
- *The Repetitive Strain Injury Recovery Book* by Deborah Quieter
- *Myofascial Pain and Dysfunction: A Trigger-Point Manuel* by Janet Travell, MD and David Simons, MD
- *Yoga for Busy People* by Dawn Groves
- [www.stretching.com](http://www.stretching.com)

It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end.

Ursula K. Le Guin

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