



USA WEEKEND

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28 expert tips
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steps — so *everyone*
can rest easier.

Health



CARPAL TUNNEL: Stop blaming your computer

IF PAIN, tingling and weakness in your fingers wake you at night, and if you have trouble making a fist during the day, you may be one of the 2% to 3% of Americans who has carpal tunnel syndrome.

But guess what? Your long hours at the computer didn't cause it, according to "Hands," a special health report from Harvard Medical School.

True, other musculoskeletal disorders, often called repetitive stress injuries, are linked to heavy computer use, says Barry P. Simmons, M.D., of Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. But he says carpal tunnel syndrome, which occurs when the median nerve at the base of the palm is compressed, can be linked to pregnancy, genetics, broken bones or even being overweight. Or, it might be a result of your job, particularly if you use vibrating tools. But overwhelmingly, the cause of the syndrome is unknown.

Unfortunately, there's no specific way to prevent carpal tunnel syndrome. Early diagnosis, however, is vital to avoid permanent damage. **W** — Susan T. Lennon

6 TIPS FOR CARPAL PAIN

- Get a full medical exam. Diabetes and arthritis may worsen carpal tunnel pain, so treat them first.
- Take a break from activities that worsen the pain.
- At night, wear a wrist splint.
- Ask your doctor about corticosteroid injections.
- See if yoga and other exercise helps.
- Consider surgery if pain has lasted at least six months.