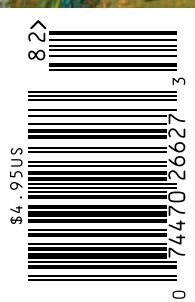


UPPER MAKEFIELD FARMHOUSE • OUR RIVER TOWNS

# Bucks County

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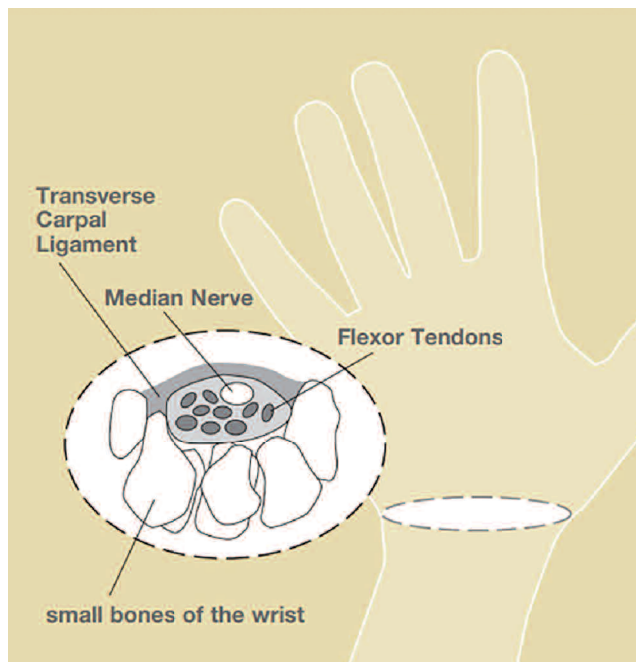
Summer 2018



**HEALTHY LIVING GUIDE / ENDANGERED SPECIES**  
**BUCKS COUNTY SWEET CORN / PRIVATE SCHOOLS**  
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## What is carpal tunnel syndrome?



What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

- Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common condition that causes pain, numbness, and tingling in the hand and arm. The condition occurs when one of the major nerves to the hand—the median nerve—is squeezed or compressed as it travels through the wrist.

- In addition to numbness and tingling, carpal tunnel syndrome can cause swelling, weakness, and nighttime pain. Patients sometimes describe dropping things unexpectedly and may have difficulty with buttoning shirts, tying shoelaces, or handling loose change.

What causes carpal tunnel syndrome?

- Carpal tunnel syndrome is frequently seen in individuals who develop swelling or inflammation in their hands. People who smoke, as well as those with connective tissue diseases, diabetes mellitus, and hypothyroidism, may be at greater risk. Repetitive work activities can also cause carpal tunnel syndrome.

- The median nerve acts as an electrical wire between the spinal cord and the hand. The nerve passes through the carpal tunnel in the wrist along with nine tendons that bend the fingers. When the tendons in the wrist become

swollen and inflamed, the median nerve can become compressed by the transverse carpal ligament (see figure), leading to carpal tunnel symptoms.

- Early on, symptoms commonly occur during sleeping hours. In more advanced cases, the symptoms can become problematic during

waking hours. Many sufferers describe symptoms with benign activities, like reading the newspaper or driving a car.

What can a hand surgeon do to help?

- A hand surgeon can order special nerve tests to verify the extent of the problem. Custom wrist splints are helpful for early stages of carpal tunnel syndrome. These splints are worn at nighttime to relieve pressure on the median nerve and to prevent the wrists from bending during sleep.

- Cortisone injections often provide excellent relief from symptoms. Unfortunately, symptomatic relief is only temporary, and most people experience a recurrence of symptoms after 3-4 months.

- For chronic or more advanced cases, carpal tunnel surgery is often recommended as the best course of treatment.

What can I expect from surgery?

- Surgery provides more space for the median nerve and relieves pressure on the median nerve and tendons. This procedure is typically done under light sedation and local anesthesia and usually takes only minutes to complete.

- While there are several differ-

ent approaches to performing carpal tunnel surgery, I prefer to make a 1/2 inch incision near the wrist and use a camera to release the tunnel under direct visualization. This minimally invasive approach minimizes discomfort following surgery and allows patients to return to activities more quickly. Over 95 percent of patients improve dramatically following surgical intervention, with most returning to daily activities within days. Many patients can resume heavier job-related activities after 2-4 weeks.

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