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The Twists and Turns of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Type, type, type. Twist, twist, twist. These are the sounds of repetitive motions that can lead to Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS). Who thought that these minute motions could lead to burning and tingling sensations in the fingers, numbness, difficulty gripping or making a fist, dropping objects and general weakness in the hands or wrists. [CTS](#) occurs when the median nerve in the wrist is compressed and does not function properly. It is the **largest single contributing factor to lost time** at work in the U.S., according to Indiana's Workers' Compensation Information Portal.

[The Indiana Guide to Workers Compensation Benefits](#) states that CTS is a repetitive trauma and "maybe compensable in Ind., if it can be shown to arise out of and in course of employment." CTS happens often, and painfully affects around 3 percent of women and 2 percent of men, according to Dr. [Daniel Benko of Benko Chiropractics](#) in Schererville, Ind. It can cost as much as \$30,000 over the injured employee's lifetime.

The pain associated with CTS can be managed with medications, wrist splinting, additional breaks from motion, chiropractic visits and in severe cases surgery, according to [Mayo Clinic](#). Employers need to monitor and communicate with physicians when opioids (pain medication) are prescribed for CTS. Opioids account for **25-40 percent of work comp prescription dollars**, according to [MyMatrix](#), who specializes in patient care and health care cost control. Besides cost, abuse of opioids leads to longer disability periods and addiction risks. Recovery care-plans for CTS vary by medical providers, thus it is important that employers communicate with all parties involved.

CTS can cost employers thousands of dollars in work comp benefits. A recent work comp probe, by the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission, reviewed the claims of hundreds of Menard Correctional Center employees seeking work comp benefits from the repetitive stress of opening and closing prison cell doors, which lead to CTS. Prison guards received as much as **\$100,000 for CTS injuries** that involved surgery and complications, according to Southwest and St. Louis based paper [Bellville News-Democrat](#). The investigation's goal was not only to make sure all claims are valid, but also to learn how to eliminate CTS in the workplace.

There are few things employers can do to eliminate the risk of CTS, but implementing the following steps may help.

- Using ergonomically designed equipment, such as specially designed keyboards, mice, wrist pads, etc.
- On-the-job conditioning; stretching exercises, frequent breaks, wear splints and use correct posture and wrist position.
- Wearing finger less gloves can help keep hands warm and flexible.
- Jobs can be rotated among workers to break the repetitive motion.

Source: [The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes](#)

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