



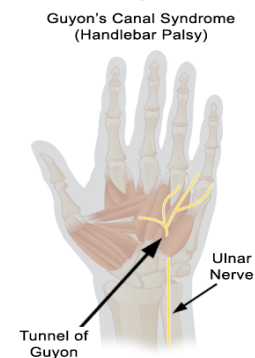
Barrhaven Chiropractic Health Centre

What do cycling and the “Hokey Pokey” have in common?

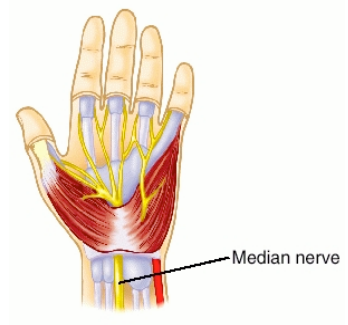
After a long morning ride down the Rideau Canal, you decide to stop and enjoy Ottawa’s beautiful scenery. The 150 year old willow tree is the perfect spot to rest your ride and take a break under the shade. The sun is beginning to heat up and the vest you had on for that brisk morning air isn’t needed anymore. As you reach to grab the zipper you realize that your finger tips feel numb and are tingling making it hard to grab the end of the zipper. You stick your right hand in, you stick your left hand out, you do the hokey pokey and you shake them all about. The tingling goes away and without any further thoughts or concerns you sit back against the willow tree and enjoy the view.

Hand numbness and/or pain can be a common symptom in cyclists, and are usually attributed to irritating one of two nerves in your hand. The ulnar nerve and median nerve are two nerves in your hand that can be irritated by constant pressure, cause by gripping handlebars.

The ulnar nerve sits between two bones, collectively know as the Guyons Canal. Pressure over Guyon’s Canal results in irritation of the nerve, causing pins and needles in the ring and little fingers, burning wrist pain, loss of sensation, and/or hand weakness or clumsiness.



The median nerve is the nerve responsible for carpal tunnel syndrome. The nerve passes in the valley, at the base of your hand between the two bumps known as your thenar and hypothenar. Symptoms of carpal tunnel are similar to those of Guyon’s canal syndrome, but the fingers affected are usually thumb, index and middle fingers.



Causes

The most common causes affecting one of these two nerves are;

1. The angles of the wrist
2. Riding on the top corners of drop bars in such a way that the bar presses over these sensitive area’s
3. Having thick foam handlebar grips, and/or gloves with too much foam or gel padding.
4. Scar tissue build-up or adhesions in the muscles or ligaments resulting in pinching of the nerve (also know as an entrapment neuropathy)

Solutions

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1. In general, ensure the wrist is held in line with the forearm. If your hand is bent upward from the forearm, the nerves can get pinched, causing numbness.
2. Avoid prolonged pressure over those two area's where the nerve is easily irritated
3. Make sure handlebar grips and/or gloves do not contain too much foam or gel. As your hands grip the handlebars the excess substance in the handlebar grips or gloves will be displaced into the valley's or canals where the nerves lie, adding more pressure on the nerves.
4. Soft-tissue treatments such as Active Release Techniques (ART®) can help to break down the scar tissue and release the pressure on the nerve.

Happy Pedaling

Dr. Franco Vincelli

Chiropractor, Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist and Active Release Technique (ART®) Provider

Let's have a healthy cycling season!