

WRIST AND HAND PROBLEMS

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Cyclists will commonly have problems with their hands and wrists during and after a ride. Some of the symptoms can be:

- Wrist Pain, Stiffness and Soreness
- Hand Pain
- Finger Stiffness
- Tingling and Numbness to the Hands and Fingers
- Locking Fingers

One of the main things to check is your position on the bike. If you are leaning too far forward on your bicycle it causes increased compression of your hands and wrists. You should not have the full weight of your upper body on your wrists. The constant stress can cause all of the above symptoms. Take steps to adjust your seat or your handlebars to solve this problem. Coates Cyclery can analyze and correct this.

Another cause can be gripping the handlebars too tightly. This can be due to fear and anxiety or a subconscious desire to over-control the bicycle. You should have a firm grip on your handlebars, but check to see if your knuckles are turning white from lack of circulation. Also, check your elbows; your arms should almost be like shock absorbers to where they will give a little bit when you roll over uneven terrain. If you are “locking” your elbows, chances are you are gripping the handlebars too tightly as well.

You can also have existing conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome, arthritis, altered circulation, tendonitis and trigger finger*. Even a normal and uneventful ride can aggravate these problems by having sustained weight and stress on your hands and wrists.

One of the best ways to manage these problems is to support your wrists while you ride. You can use wrist supports with your riding gloves. These are simple straps that wrap around your wrists and are secured by a Velcro strap. A much easier solution is to purchase some weightlifting gloves with the strap already attached; this way you don't have as many items for which you have to account. There are a few club members, including yours truly, who use these gloves to prevent wrist and hand problems. The weightlifting glove provides protection and shock absorption for your hands on the handlebar, and supports your wrists at the same time.

Another way to manage wrist and hand problems when riding is to open and close your fingers and do circles with your wrists. These should be done preferably when you are stopped at a stoplight or on a break from riding.

***Trigger Finger occurs when you flex your finger(s) or thumb and can't open them again. The cause is commonly from the tendon adhering to its sheath from scar tissue.**

After a ride, as soon as possible, you can use a cool pack on your wrists to check inflammation that can occur during the ride. Later on, warm water soaks or a Jacuzzi can help with the stiffness and pain. A paraffin bath that is used in salons and nail shops is an effective treatment for wrist and hand stiffness.

Resistive wrist strengthening exercises can help prevent problems while riding. You can use light weights or a therapy band to exercise your wrists. You can also squeeze a tennis ball or racquetball to improve your grip strength. Over time, with the appropriate exercises, you can strengthen your wrist and hands. That will translate into a pain free ride.