

TJ Ridley, MD

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Carpal Tunnel Release Post-Operative Instructions**WOUND CARE:**

- After surgery, wounds are typically covered with a soft dressing. This may be removed on post operative day four.
- Following dressing removal, you may resume showers and gentle hand washing, allowing soapy water to run over the incisions but avoid scrubbing and pat dry. Refrain from soaking the wounds under water.
- After the initial dressing is removed, additional dressings (such as bandaids or gauze with ace wrap) may be utilized to cover the incisions to protect the area and limit aggravation of the sutures. Make sure to keep the dressing clean and dry.
- Do not stick anything into the ends of the dressing. This can introduce bacteria or cause scratches which may develop into an infection.
- Keep your incisions clean and dry at all times.
- Do not submerge the wounds in water (bathtub, pool, lake) for at least 2 weeks after surgery.

DIET:

- After surgery, some patients experience nausea. This can be related to anesthesia or pain medication. It is best to begin with clear liquids and light food (crackers). You may progress slowly to your normal diet if not nauseated.
- Patients are sometimes prescribed an anti-nausea medication after surgery. This can be used to treat nausea. If nausea or vomiting persists despite medication, please call the office.
- Pain medication can also cause constipation. An over-the-counter laxative, high-fiber diet or fruit juice may be helpful.

MEDICATION:

- Most home medications may be resumed the evening of surgery or the following day unless specifically directed by your surgeon.
- Typically, patients are not given a prescription for narcotic pain medication.
- Pain is best managed with Tylenol (acetaminophen), Advil (ibuprofen) or Aleve (naproxen).
- Some patients may receive a nerve block prior to surgery. This block lasts a different length of time in each patient, but typically lasts 12-18 hours. When you begin to feel some tingling in the extremity, the block is beginning to wear off. This is a good time to begin taking oral pain medication.
- Pain medication likely will not take away all of your pain. It is okay to have some discomfort.
- OTC Vitamin C (500mg for 50 days)
 - This has been shown to reduce the risk of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)

ACTIVITY:

- You may use your hand, but do not perform any tight grip activities for the first few weeks after surgery.
- You are encouraged to open and close your hand to encourage circulation and prevent stiffness.
- Return to work depends on your job requirements, specifics of your surgery and pain/swelling levels. This can be discussed at your follow-up appointment.
- Do not resume sports, use exercise equipment or perform strenuous physical activity (including lifting weights) until your surgeon says it is okay.
- Return to driving after surgery is okay once narcotic pain medication has been stopped and you feel safe to drive.
- You are encouraged to schedule follow up visit with hand therapist 5-10 days after surgery

REASONS TO CALL THE OFFICE:

Please call the office at (763)786-9543 for any of these concerns:

- Fever above 101.5°F
- Excess drainage at surgical incisions
- Worsening pain in the operative site not controlled with medication
- Excess nausea/vomiting
- Numbness in the operative arm or hand
 - Some numbness can be expected initially after surgery if a nerve block was used
- Redness around the incision site
- Any other questions or concerns

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT:

- You may schedule a follow up visit with the hand therapist 5-10 days after surgery
- A post-operative follow-up appointment with Dr. Ridley's team will be made for you at the time your surgery is scheduled for 10-14 days after surgery. If you do not have an appointment scheduled after surgery, please call our office.
 - Your sutures will be removed and your overall hand appearance will be assessed.
 - Prescription refills and work restrictions will be addressed if needed.

WHEN CAN I?

Drive:

You will be permitted to drive (automatic transmission) after surgery as long as you are not taking any narcotics and you feel comfortable behind the wheel. You may consider practicing in a large parking lot to make sure you can react quickly in an emergency. Studies suggest postsurgical patients wait 1-2 weeks before driving but life circumstances may mean you need to drive sooner than that provided you meet the minimum requirements mentioned above.

Return to Work:

This will vary depending on the demands of your job. You may discuss your return with Dr. Ridley.

Shower: You will be able to shower the first post-op day, keeping the operative dressing dry and clean. You should always cover the dressings while showering. Following dressing removal on post operative day four, you may resume your normal shower and hand washing routines, avoiding submersion or soaking of the wound.

Use a Hot tub: Do not use a hot tub or bath until sutures have been removed and wounds are completely closed.

Do lower body exercise: You may resume lower body activities as tolerated.