

Post-Op Information: Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery

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WHAT TO EXPECT THE FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER SURGERY:

- After the procedure, your hand will be bandaged in a soft dressing. Your fingers will be free but may get stiff and sore due to swelling in the hand. You are encouraged to move and use them for light things right away. This includes things like eating, dressing, and typing.
- Your fingers may be numb for several hours after the procedure from the numbing medication. This will eventually resolve. Take pain medication when the numbness **begins** to go away.
- Many patients experience some symptom relief right away (night symptoms are usually the first to resolve), but complete recovery can take several months to a year depending on pre-surgery severity.
- Elevating the arm above the level of the heart during the first 24 hours after surgery will minimize swelling.
- You can apply ice packs over your dressing or in your elbow crease above the dressing for 10-15 minutes every hour while awake.
- You may remove your dressing 4 days after your procedure and take a shower. Let soapy water run over the incision, and rinse. Do not soak your incision until the wound is fully healed and sutures have been removed (no dishes, no hot tubs, no swimming pools). You can apply a thin layer of Bacitracin to the incision daily. Keep a large Band-Aid or gauze + tape over the incision at all times until the sutures have been removed.
- No brace is needed after surgery.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE HEALING PROCESS:

- Normal carpal tunnel incisions will have swelling and a small amount of redness. Several weeks after surgery, the skin edges will often peel. This is normal wound healing and not a sign of infection. Bruising around the incision or down the forearm is also common. We can arrange for you to be seen in clinic and check your incision if needed.
- The area around your incision will be tender for 6-8 weeks. Avoid any direct impact on the incision during this time.
- Around 3 weeks after surgery, the scar at the incision site will get harder and firmer. This may feel like there is an almond under your skin. **This is normal healing.** The scar will gradually soften and flatten. You can do gentle scar massage with any unscented lotion daily once the incision has fully healed or use silicone gel sheets/tape (Scaraway or other brands, available on Amazon, Target or any pharmacy).

PAIN MEDICATIONS:

- Please take ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) and/or Tylenol (acetaminophen) for pain control.
 - Ibuprofen: up to 600 mg three times per day. We recommend you take this with meals.
 - Tylenol: up to 1000 mg (2 extra strength or 3 regular strength) up to three times per day.
 - You can take these medications separately but It is also safe to combine these medications together.
- Do not combine acetaminophen with pain medications such as Vicodin or Percocet, as those medications also contain acetaminophen.
- We may also give you a small, one-time prescription for some narcotic pain medication (like oxycodone) to use for the first 1-2 days after surgery.
- Constipation is a common side effect from the anesthesia and pain medication- drink lots of water and take over the counter Colace and/or Senna as directed on the bottle while taking pain medication. MiraLAX can also be helpful.

RETURN TO WORK:

- If you primarily do deskwork (typing, etc.), you may return to work within a few days.
- If you do more active work requiring occasional heavy lifting or repetitive handling of small objects, you may return to work with restrictions (no lifting >5 lbs, no repetitive grasp) at 7-14 days after surgery.
- If you do heavy work such as construction, loading trucks, or landscaping, you may need further restrictions.
- Please bring any paperwork you need for your employer to your appointment.

FOLLOW UP:

- Please schedule a follow-up appointment 10-14 days after your procedure.
 - At this appointment the wound will be checked, and stitches will be removed.
- Please schedule a second follow-up appointment with your surgeon 6 weeks after your procedure.

OTHER QUESTIONS:

- Infection is rare but please watch for signs and symptoms of infection and call our office immediately and arrange to be seen urgently if you experience any of the following:
 - Redness spreading beyond the area directly around the incision or sutures
 - Yellow or white fluid coming from the incision or around the sutures
 - Wound splitting open between the sutures and fluid coming out of the incision
- Please do not hesitate to call our office with any questions or concerns or write them down and bring them to your next appointment.

SIMPLE FINGER MOTION EXERCISES

Perform 10 reps at least 3 times a day. It may be painful to move your fingers at first, but the pain and swelling in your fingers should improve as you do the exercises. It's okay and encouraged to use your other hand to help move your fingers into the correct position.

Straight: All finger joints straight.

Tabletop: Bend the joints where your fingers meet your hand (MP joints), keep your other finger joints (IP joints) straight.

Claw: Straighten the joints where your fingers meet your hand (MP joints), bend your other finger joints.

Fist: Bend all three joints to bring your fingertips to your palm

