

Carpal Tunnel Release

General Post-Operative Instructions for Carpal Tunnel Release

What to Expect:

The local anesthetic that was injected into your palm will make your hand feel numb for 8-12 hours. Your fingers may or may not feel numb during that time, as a variable amount of anesthetic actually reaches the nerve tissue.

You will have a moderate amount of pain for the first 3-4 days; this should be adequately addressed by the oral narcotic pain medication that was prescribed when you left the day surgery suite (Vicodin or Oxycodone). The usual dose of an anti-inflammatory such as Advil is recommended at the same time you are taking the pain medication (unless you have a history of ulcers or other gastrointestinal ailment). Some patients find this very helpful if the prescribed pain medication isn't relieving the pain sufficiently.

Other measures that are helpful in relieving pain include elevating the hand on a few pillows and draping a plastic bag filled with crushed ice over the splint and dressing (place a dish towel or small hand towel over your arm first so the dressing doesn't get wet).

Keep in mind if your fingers were numb prior to surgery, your numbness may not resolve right away.

The First Five Days:

Keep your hand elevated as much as possible (prop it up on a couple of pillows). When lying on your back if you place your hand on a pillow you can put your hand inside the pillow case so that your hand will not fall off of the pillow.

Put a plastic bag over your forearm and hand when showering (keep dressing dry).

If you experience any worrisome symptoms such as a fever higher than 101.5 degrees or markedly increased pain, contact Catherine during normal office hours. If it is after business hours and you need to reach the doctor on-call you may call our main number:(503)214-5200 and this will put you in contact with the doctor on-call.

The Sixth Day:

Using a pair of scissors, cut the soft part of the dressing on the back of your wrist and completely remove. At this point, it is fine to wash with warm water and soap. It is also okay to shower over the stitches, but don't soak your hand and wrist.

Cover the incision with a band-aid after washing. You will feel more comfortable wearing an off the shelf wrist immobilizer for the first few weeks after surgery. The brace will help prevent overuse that can cause swelling and increased pain. If you don't have a brace, you can purchase one at your local pharmacy. The brace should be worn full time for the first 2 weeks, followed by two more weeks at night and during the day if doing any physical activity with the hand.

Activity Level:

After you have changed the dressing, you can begin gentle range of motion exercises. This should consist of flexing and extending the fingers, and gently flexing and extending the wrist. You may use your hand for light activities such as

eating, dressing, typing, etc. Try to avoid vigorously bending the wrist down (flexion) as it can disturb the area of healing in the palm.

Follow-up:

Schedule a post-operative appointment for 9-14 days after the surgery for suture removal (appointment desk (503) 214-5266).