



Orthopaedic Department

Carpal Tunnel Decompression: Following your surgery

What to expect after surgery

Following a Local Anaesthetic, it may take several hours before the feeling comes back into your wrist and hand.

If you had a General Anaesthetic, you will need to rest until the effects have worn off. You may need to take pain relief to help with any discomfort. Your surgeon can advise you on this. If you need pain relief, you can take over the counter painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Follow the instructions in the patient information that comes with your medicine and if you have any questions, ask your pharmacist for advice.

If you have had a General Anaesthetic, you will need to arrange for someone to drive you home. Try to have a friend or relative stay with you for the first 24 hours.

Day Surgery Unit staff will give you some advice about caring for your healing wounds before you go home. You may be given a date for a follow-up appointment.

Swelling: The treatment of swelling is very important in the rehabilitation of your hand or arm. The following techniques can be used to reduce swelling and improve your overall hand function.

Elevation

For elevation to be effective the hand must be raised above the heart. Keep your hand raised as much as possible during the day. You may wear a sling if this has been provided but this is not necessary in many cases. Pillows may be used to raise the hand or arm when sitting and whilst in bed at night.

Stitches are removed 10 to 14 days after surgery usually at your GP practice. (You will need to arrange this)

Recovering from carpal tunnel decompression surgery

It usually takes about four weeks to make a good recovery from carpal tunnel decompression surgery, but this varies between individuals, so it's important to follow



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your surgeon's advice.

At night, try to keep your hand raised on two pillows in your bed for the first two or three nights.

Wound Care

Look out for the following warning signs:

- Excessive heat or swelling
- Discharge
- Fever

If you are concerned please contact your GP or the Day Surgery Unit.

Exercises

You should try to move your elbow and shoulder regularly to loosen your joints.

Please try to complete exercises 1- 3 three times a day until the stitches are removed. Exercises 4 and 5 can be started following removal of your stitches within the limits of pain. Do not force movement for the first 4 weeks.



1. Open and close your fingers to make a fist, stretching as far as you can and making sure you include your thumb.

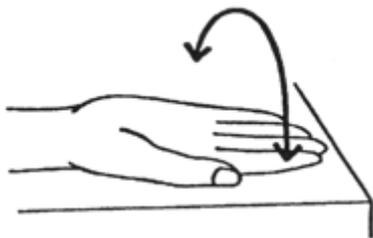
Repeat 10 times

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2. Sit with your forearm supported on a table. Bend your wrist up and down and side to side as far as you can.

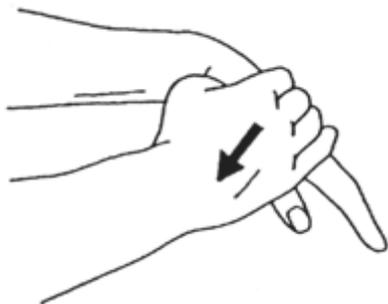
Repeat 10 times.



3. Forearm on a table, or elbow by your side. Turn your palm over to face the ceiling as far as you can. Then turn down towards the floor as far as you can.

Make sure you keep your elbow still throughout both.

Repeat 10 times.



4. Forearm supported on a table with your hand over the edge and palm facing down.

Hold just below your wrist joint. Bend the wrist, then using the heel of your other hand, add pressure to increase the downward movement of your wrist. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds.

Repeat 10 times.

(This exercise should then be repeated as above in the opposite (upwards) direction.)



5. Sit or stand, forearms horizontally in front of you and palms together.

Push palms together for five seconds. Relax.

Repeat

(Illustrations - © PhysioTools Ltd)

Scar Care

Patient Information

There may be tenderness around the scar. This normally subsides by six weeks but it may persist for up to three months. Massaging the scar with a non perfumed cream or oil can be helpful to relieve these symptoms.

How long will I be off work?

You can expect to return to work within a few weeks after surgery depending upon the nature of your job. Jobs involving heavy work may require you to remain off work for up to six weeks.

When can I drive?

You may find driving difficult for several weeks after the operation. Before attempting to drive you should be able to make a complete fist and grip a hard surface without pain (e.g. squeeze the back of a dining chair).

Further Information

If you need further information please contact your Therapy Department:

University Hospital, Coventry and Warwickshire: Tel 024 7696 6016

Rugby, St Cross Hospital: Tel 01788 663257 For further information please visit our hand service web site <http://tinyurl.com/uhcwhand>

In the event of you experiencing any problems please contact your GP or the Day Surgery Unit.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6861 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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