

Carpal Tunnel Release Post-Op Instructions

Overview:

You have had a carpal tunnel release. Through a small incision at the base of your palm, your surgeon has released the transverse carpal ligament to allow more space in the carpal tunnel and reduce pressure on the main nerve to your hand.

After Surgery:

Local anesthetic has been injected so most of your hand and your fingers will be numb after surgery. Once this wears off (in 2-5 hours), it is normal for the incision and base of your palm to be a little tender for up to 3-4 weeks from surgery. Numbness and tingling should improve but can take weeks to months. In very severe carpal tunnel syndrome numbness can take even a year or more to improve.

Incision Care:

You will have a large bandage on after surgery. You can remove this after 2 days, clean the incision with soap and water, and apply a small band aid to protect the incision. You should avoid getting your hand dirty or completely immersing it in water for two weeks and the incision is completely sealed.

If the bandage feels very tight sometime after surgery, you may loosen it. Make sure you are keeping your hand up above the level of your heart.

Activity and Care at Home:

It is very important to keep your hand elevated after hand surgery to prevent swelling and pain. You may move your fingers for the first 2 days and may use your hand for very light tasks after 2 days. Avoid heavy lifting or gripping for 3-4 weeks then gradually ease back into normal activity. You should be back to full activities by 4-5 weeks from surgery.

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Pain Management:

Some discomfort and pain following surgery is to be expected. You should take ibuprofen (Advil) and acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 6 hours as directed on the container labels. You can take ibuprofen and acetaminophen at the same time as they will add together to work better to manage your pain. Do not exceed the recommended doses. You may want to use an ice pack over the bandage. Keep surgical areas elevated and avoid any strenuous activities. For further information on pain management, please refer to the post-operative pain instruction sheet.

IMPORTANT:

Call if you have fever, increasing pain, a foul smell to the dressings, increased redness, or persistent bleeding.

If you have had hand surgery under a general anaesthetic or sedation you must not drive or operate other machinery for 24 hours after surgery. Please note that the Motor Vehicle Act of BC 195 (1) prohibits operation of a motor vehicle if "the control of the driver over the driving mechanism of the vehicle... is obstructed." Driving with a hand injury or cast in place that impairs your ability to hold the steering wheel is therefore in violation of the Act. You may resume driving once you have return of function to your operated hand and no longer require narcotic pain medication.