



Post-operative Instructions: Carpal Tunnel Release

DIET

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods (Jell-O, soups, etc.)
- Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated

MEDICATIONS

Prescribed Narcotics:

- This medication may be taken as needed for pain as directed on the bottle.
- Do not drive or drink alcohol while taking this medication.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)/OTC Anti-inflammatory medication (Ibuprofen or Aleve)

- This medications may be taken as needed.
- Please use as directed on the bottle.
- Do not exceed 4,000 mg of Acetaminophen in a 24 hour period.

Stool softener:

- We recommend picking up an over the counter stool softer such as MiraLax, as a common side effect of narcotic pain medication is constipation.
- It is normal to take several days to make a bowel movement after surgery.
- Drink plenty of clear liquids as the anesthesia can cause dehydration/constipation as well.

WOUND CARE

- After surgery, a bulky dressing will be placed on your hand and wrist. Your dressing should be kept clean and dry. The dressing can be removed 1-2 days after surgery, and the hand lightly cleaned with soap and water. The incision should not be soaked in water, such as in a bathtub, or vigorously rubbed to clean. You may dry the incision by patting it lightly with a clean, dry towel. A new, clean dressing should then be applied over the incision, such as a band aid. Dressings should be changed daily and as needed for any bleeding or drainage.
- The incision should be inspected daily, and any abnormal drainage or excessive bleeding should be reported immediately.
- Your sutures will be removed at your clinic visit, usually 10-14 days after surgery. There may be a superficial crack or separation at the incision line, which is normal. The separation on the skin will grow out with time and be flat.

ACTIVITY

- To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills (plain Tylenol, ibuprofen, or Aleve is allowed). Also, you must feel strong and alert, and able to grip the steering wheel with both hands.
- Elevate your hand to decrease swelling and discomfort. Mild to moderate swelling is expected after surgery. Your hand should be elevated above the level of your heart for best results. Local anesthesia has been used around the incision, which may cause numbness of the fingers and may last for hours up to a full day. Discomfort may return as the local anesthetic wears off.
- Ice may be applied to the surgical area to help with pain. Avoid direct contact with the skin, as this may result in damage to the skin. Instead, wrap an ice pack or bag of ice in a towel before



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placing on the hand. We generally recommend icing 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off for the first 48 hours.

EXERCISE

- Heavy lifting or strenuous activity should be avoided until permitted by your doctor, usually 3 weeks postoperatively. Hand therapy may be recommended for you following surgery.

EMERGENCIES

Contact our office at (608) 231-3410, if any of the following are present:

- Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal)
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever (over 101° – it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
- Color change in distal arm and/or hand
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- Calf pain
- If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room.

FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS

- If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled or if you need to change the appointment, please contact our scheduler at 608-231-3410 to schedule.
- Your first post-operative appointment will be scheduled with one of the Physician Assistants, for a wound check, physical therapy protocol and to answer any further questions you have regarding the procedure
- Typically the first post-operative appointment is made for 10-14 days following surgery for suture removal if you have any sutures in place.