



Carpal Tunnel/Cubital Tunnel Release Post-Op Instructions

Hand & Wrist Surgery

After Your Surgery—Days 1–14

- **Diet** – Clear liquids, progressing to regular diet as tolerated.
- **Medication** – Take pain medication as instructed.
- **Dressing and splint care**
 - You'll have a bulky dressing and splint.
 - Keep dressing clean, dry and intact until follow-up appointment.
 - Wrap your hand in plastic wrap when showering.
 - Small amounts of drainage are normal.
- **Ice and elevation**
 - Use ice and elevation throughout the healing process.
 - Use 1 to 2 pillows for at least 24 hours post-op – helps relieve swelling and pain.
- **Activities**
 - No strenuous activity or heavy lifting until cleared by surgeon.
 - Wiggle fingers (piano fashion).
- **Follow-up appointment** – You'll have a follow-up appointment in 10 to 14 days.
- **You may remove your surgical bandage after 4 days. However, you must keep the incision dry until the sutures are removed at your follow-up doctor's appointment.** We recommend keeping the incision site covered until your appointment. You can use the ace wrap provided to cover.
- Do not use ointments of any kinds.



It is common to have post-operative pain. You may wrap a bag of frozen peas or crushed ice in a thin towel and place on your incision sites for 15 minutes of every hour while you are awake. Elevating your hand above heart level on several pillows will also help with post-operative pain. You should take the prescribed medication only as needed and as prescribed. If you are having increased pain, you may take an anti-inflammatory medication such as Advil, Motrin or Aleve with your pain medication but DO NOT take Tylenol with the pain medication prescribed

After Your Surgery — Weeks 2–4

- **Follow-up appointment**
 - Incision will be inspected.
 - Sutures will be removed.
- **Exercises** – 5 to 10 repetitions, 3 times a day
 - Range of motion exercises
 - Rotate your wrist up and down, side to side
 - Stretch your fingers apart, relax them, stretch again
 - Stretch your thumb by pulling it back, hold it, then release and repeat
 - Strengthening exercises
 - Squeeze a rubber ball
 - Wrist curls with a 3-pound weight
- **Scar tissue management and desensitization**
 - Scar massage – Apply thick lotion or cream to your scar in a circular motion (firmly) for 5 minutes at least 4 times per day.
 - Desensitization – Rub the scar site for one minute every day.
 - Continue with scar massage for 6 months after surgery.

Scar Management and Desensitization



During your surgical procedure for carpal tunnel syndrome, your surgeon will release the transverse carpal ligament in your hand, leaving a gap where the ligament was cut. The gap eventually will fill with **scar tissue**. Two days after your sutures are removed, if the skin is completely closed, you will need to start massaging the scar. You will place your finger on the scar, and maintaining pressure move your finger in circles, diagonals, up and down, and side to side. Do this all along the length of the scar. Do not rub the skin, move the skin.

Over time, the scar tissue matures and becomes less pliable. As it tightens, scar tissue can:

- Interfere with achieving full range of motion
- Cause pain
- Cause hypersensitivity on or around the scar surface

Often, the surgical site/scar and surrounding tissue are left feeling hypersensitive because the scar tissue and swelling have interrupted your skin's sensory nerve fibers.

Performing scar massage and desensitization techniques can help your sensory nerves to normalize and function properly again.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use my hand after surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome?

Starting immediately, you can move your hand for gentle range of motion. No lifting heavier than a telephone or coffee mug for 2 weeks.

Can I drive after surgery?



You may not drive yourself home from surgery. You must have a driver.

You may not drive when you are taking narcotic pain medication.

Your surgeon will tell you how long after your surgery until you can drive again. The legal position is that it's the patient who makes the decision as to whether you are safe to drive.

How long will I be off work after surgery?

When you can return to work depends on your progress, as assessed by your surgeon. Generally, you can return to work in 1 to 2 weeks.

Call Immediately If You Experience

- Severe pain or swelling
 - Nail discoloration from pink to white or blue
 - Excessive bleeding or drainage
 - Increased redness
 - Fever of 101°F or greater
- If any of these signs appear, consult your physician immediately



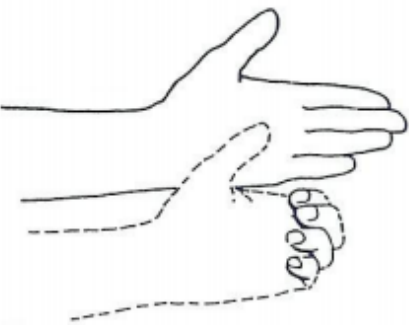
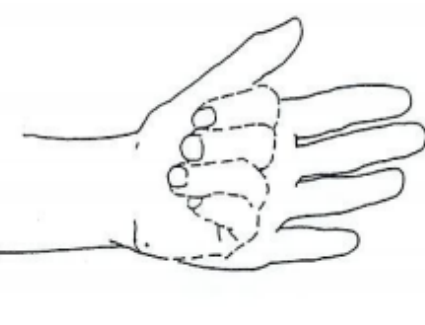

Post-Operative Home Exercises for Carpal Tunnel Release

Please start doing this exercise on the 2nd or 3rd day after surgery.

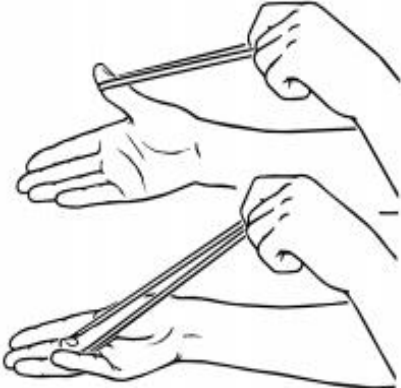


Wrist Flexor Long Arm Stretch
<p>Keeping elbow straight, grasp one hand and slowly bend wrist back until stretch is felt. Hold. Relax.</p>
<p>Hold 10 Seconds. Repeat 3 times 2x/day</p>

AROM Thumb IP Flexion - Blocking	AROM PIP Flexion Blocking	AROM DIP Flex -Blocking
<p>Brace thumb leaving tip free. Bend as far as possible, then straighten.</p>	<p>Pinch bottom knuckle of finger of to prevent bending. Actively bend middle knuckle until stretch is felt.</p>	<p>Pinch middle knuckle of finger of one hand to prevent bending. Bend end knuckle until stretch is felt.</p>
<p>10 repetitions 1x/day</p>	<p>10 repetitions each finger 1x/day</p>	<p>10 repetitions each finger 1x/day</p>



Flexor Tendon Glide - Active Hook Fist	Flexor Tendon Glide - Active Straight Fist	Finger Opposition
		
<p>With fingers and knuckles straight, bend middle and tip joints. Keep large knuckles straight.</p>	<p>Start with fingers straight. Bend knuckles and middle joints. Keep fingertips straight to touch the base of your palm.</p>	<p>Actively touch thumb to each fingertip. Start with index finger and proceed toward little finger. Move slowly at first, then more rapidly as motion and coordination improve. Be sure to touch each fingertip.</p>
<p>10 repetitions 1x/day</p>	<p>10 repetitions 1x/day</p>	<p>10 repetitions 1x/day</p>

Please start doing these exercises 3 weeks after surgery.

Band Thumb Opposition	Putty - Weight Bearing	Putty - Grip
		
<p>With rubber band around thumb, hold other end with other hand. Rotate thumb up and over toward little finger. Repeat toward each finger.</p>	<p>Place palm on putty and roll the putty back and forth.</p>	<p>Squeeze putty with all fingers and thumb.</p>
<p>10 repetitions 1x/day</p>	<p>Practice for 1 - 3 minutes</p>	<p>Practice for 3- 5 minutes</p>