

Post-Op Instructions for Carpal Tunnel Release

After your surgery, post-surgical discomfort or pain is likely. This discomfort can last several days to a few weeks. At certain times of the day your discomfort may be more intense. Start range of motion exercises including making a fist and touching your thumb to all your fingers as tolerated to prevent stiffness.

Dressings:

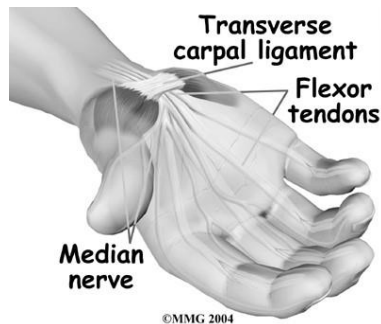
You will have a wrap over your incision site. Please leave this on for 3-5 days based on your comfort. After that time, you can remove the wrap and other dressings. If you would like, you can place a band aid over the incision. Once the dressings are off you can shower and clean the area with soap and water if needed. Do not soak the incision (no baths, pool) for 2-3 weeks.

For pain you have after your surgery we recommend the following:

1. If you were prescribed narcotic pain medication, take it for moderate to severe pain only.
2. Take **Ibuprofen** 800mg by mouth every 8 hours for 3 days after surgery, then take as needed. (Do not take Ibuprofen if you have been instructed by your primary doctor not to take NSAIDs or anti-inflammatories due to Kidney problems, history of stomach ulcers, or if you are also on a blood thinner or anti-coagulant like lovenox, coumadin, xarelto, etc.)
3. Take **Tylenol** (acetaminophen) regularly alternating with the Ibuprofen. There is typically acetaminophen in the narcotic pain medication, so be sure not to exceed 3000 mg of acetaminophen per 24 hours.
4. Focus on **elevation**, keeping the hand at the level of the heart or higher. When up and walking around, you should have the hand resting on your chest. When sitting, you can rest the arm on the elbow with fingers pointing toward the ceiling or rest the hand on several pillows.
5. Nausea is a common side effect of many pain medications. You will want to eat something before taking your pain medicine to help prevent nausea.
6. If needed, using a **cold pack** to ice the affected area a few times a day (15 to 20 minutes at a time) can help to relieve pain, reduce swelling and bruising.

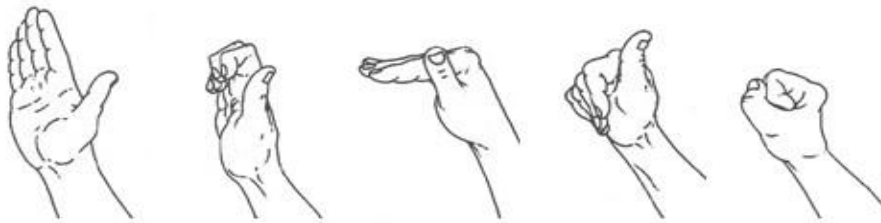
Carpal Tunnel Release Home Exercise Program (3-5 days post operatively)

Carpal tunnel syndrome is compression of the nerve that gives you sensation to the thumb, index and middle fingers of your hand. Surgery for this compression is to release the ligament that causes the compression. Symptoms often times resolve quite quickly after surgery, but it may take time for the numbness to resolve.



As your body heals from surgery, there is a risk that scar tissue can build up around the tendons and nerve, making it hard to bend your fingers. For this reason, it is very important that you do the following exercises to prevent this from happening.

Tendon Gliding Exercises

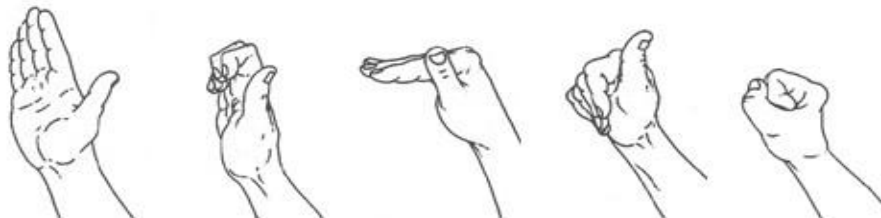


Perform this sequence of fists 10 repetitions, 5 times per day.

Carpal Tunnel Release Home Exercise Program (3 weeks post operatively)

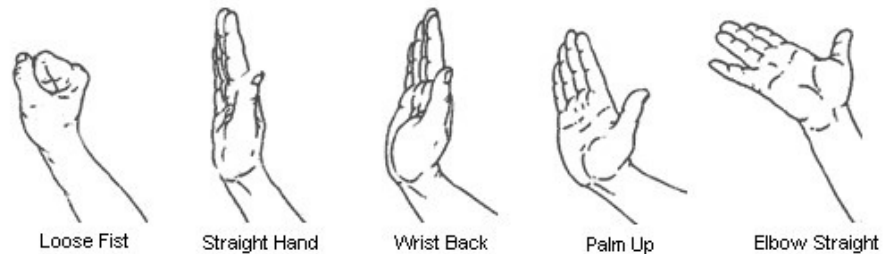
Now that you are 3 weeks post operatively, you should have most if not all of your range of motion back, but you will need to continue doing your tendon gliding exercises for at least the next 3 weeks, as your body continues to form scar.

Tendon Gliding Exercises



Perform this sequence of fists 10 repetitions, 5 times per day.

Now that your incision is healed and we can be more vigorous with your wrist motion, it is important to glide the median nerve along its path to avoid it also being surrounded by scar tissue. That is done by performing this series of motions:



Repeat this sequence 5 repetitions, 5 times per day – Hold each position 10 seconds.

Post operative instructions:

Scar Care: Massage your scar with lotion for 5 minutes 5 times per day. Use a moderately deep pressure to help flatten the scar and decrease its sensitivity to pressure.

Splint: Wear your splint at night until 6 weeks post operatively as needed for support.

Returning to Activities:

- Most patients can resume full use of their hand after surgery by about 6 weeks post operatively, but please let your comfort be your guide. Do not repetitively perform activities that cause you pain. A gradual return to activities without pain is our goal.
- If you do not feel that your strength is returning by the 6th week, please contact your therapist as you might need one more session to add hand strengthening to your home exercises.

EMERGENCIES - Contact Dr. Barnes' office at (239) 334-7000 if any of the following are present:

- Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal)
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever (over 101° F – it is normal to have a low grade fever (<100°) for the first day or two following surgery) or chills.
- Redness around incisions
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing

If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room.