

Carpal Tunnel Decompression

After the operation

Using your hand

There is good evidence that the sooner you try to use your hand after the operation the quicker you will get back to normal. You should use your hand and fingers as normally as you can and as soon as you feel able to do so. Make sure also that you can fully move your elbow and shoulder, and can fully turn over your forearm and hand as well as following the hand exercises set out below. You will not harm your hand or the operation healing by using it early even if it does feel sore. It's usual to have some wound pain and you should take simple painkillers as needed to help you use your hand.

Exercises

From day 1: Bend your fingers to touch your palm then fully straighten them.

Bend your thumb to touch the base of your little finger and then fully straighten.

From day 3: Continue these exercises and also:

Move your wrist forward, and then bend it backwards, with your fingers straight.

From day 10: Continue these exercises until you are using your hand normally.

Massage the scar by hand with small circular movements using simple hand cream (eg E45); brush the scar and skin on either side with a soft brush such as a toothbrush; tap the palm of your hand first on a soft surface (padded arm of a chair) and then later on a harder surface (tabletop). These exercises will reduce sensitivity and soreness of the scar.

Dressings

After the operation the wound will have been covered by a simple dressing. We will give you some spare dressings to take home but if you need more any simple wound dressing that you can get from the chemist will be fine. You should keep your hand dry for the first three days. Then change the dressing and give the hand a gentle wash. Keep the wound covered (redressing as needed) for a week, but then leave it open to the air. If the dressing gets soaked or very dirty in this time it will need to be changed, the hand gently cleaned and dried and the dressing replaced.

Stitches

Your stitches are dissolving and will take up to three weeks to dissolve completely. These do not need to be removed. Some inflammation around the stitch is normal. If you have any problems with the healing of your wound please contact us on 01206 216990 for advice.

Work

You should take it easy for at least 48 hours after your operation. If your job doesn't involve heavy work, you can then go back. If it does you should take a full week off. You will recover quicker the sooner you return to normal activities including work. Most patients can do all their normal work by two weeks after the operation; if you have heavy manual work, or work that involves a lot of repetitive hand and finger movements, you may need to start gently and it may take three to four weeks to recover fully, but it is still better to return to work early.

Driving

Most patients return to driving at one to two weeks after operation. Driving will not harm your hand. The law and insurance companies say that you must be fully in control of your car to drive. When you feel ready it's a good idea to ask another driver to help you with a practice drive off the highway; that way you can be sure you are in control.

What might happen?

The wound bleeds or oozes: this can happen early after the operation and looks more alarming than it is. If this happens change the dressing. If you need to change the dressing again tape some gauze over the dressing for 24-48 hours to apply some local pressure. Do not leave the gauze in place for longer than this as it will restrict the use of your hand.

The wound aches: this is common after the operation and settles quicker if you can use your hand normally. Follow the exercises listed above. You might also get electric shock type symptoms in your wound for some weeks after the operation; these gradually settle on their own

The wound widens and seem to split: In some people, about ten days after the operation, the top layer of skin splits and shows pink healthy new skin underneath. This is a normal part of healing in some people and using the hand will not cause damage; it's not possible to properly split the wound at this stage as it has strongly healed by then.

Other symptoms. Some people notice their hand feels weak, particularly when gripping. Others have a feeling of numbness at the finger tips. These symptoms gradually settle over a few weeks

Follow up

We will arrange for a phone consultation with you approximately two weeks after the operation to check with you how your recovery is proceeding.

Contacting us

You can contact us on **01206 216 990**.

Further information

Please ask any member of the team if you have any questions not answered by this sheet