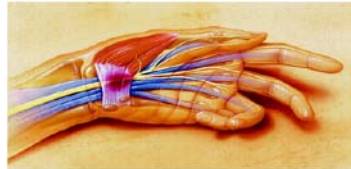


Exercises following CARPAL TUNNEL SURGERY

By Rachel Delaney, Hand therapist
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Surgical Treatment

The open carpal tunnel release, involves an incision in the base of the palm. The ligament that forms the top of the carpal tunnel is then cut, allowing the tunnel to expand. If there is thickened lining around the tendons, this can be removed, giving the median nerve more room within the tunnel.



Following the procedure a bulky dressing will be applied to your hand and wrist.

If you return home the same day, the nurse on your ward will advise you when the dressing will be reduced. If you stay overnight, your dressing will be reduced before you leave the hospital.

Your sutures will be removed between 10-14 days post surgery.

What you can do for the best results

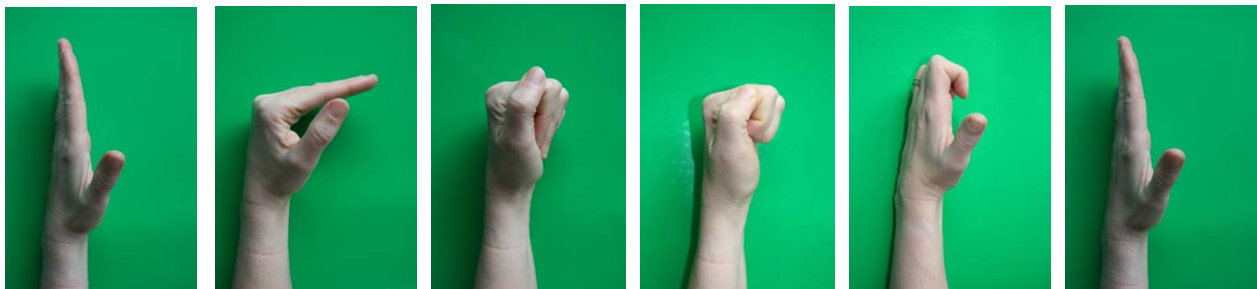
Minimise Swelling:

Keep your hand elevated as much as possible as this will reduce your swelling. When you sleep at night place your hand on a pillow to keep it elevated.

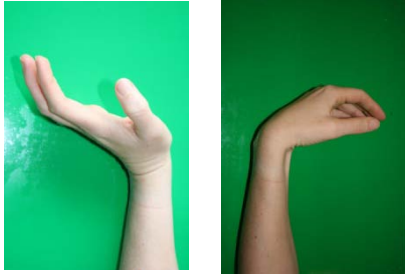
Exercises:

It is important to begin the following exercises from the first day post surgery.

1. Tendon Gliding Exercises



2. Gently bend your wrist back and forward.



3. Touch your thumb to the tip of each finger. Initially you may only be able to touch the tips of one or two fingers, but will progress to being able to touch each fingertip.

All of these exercises should be done 3-4 times a day. Do 5-10 repetitions each.

None of the exercises should be significantly painful, although you may initially experience a little discomfort.

Scar:

Once your wound is completely closed and the sutures have been removed, begin massaging your scar and the surrounding area with lotion. Any non perfumed hand cream will be suitable. The massage will help soften your scar, decrease sensitivity and promote healing.

Sensation:

Many people will experience immediate improvement in the sensation in their fingers, with less numbness and/or tingling. However, it may take a few days or weeks to notice the improvement.

Activity and Use of your Hand:

You may begin using your hand for light tasks, e.g. dressing, eating etc as soon as pain allows (however, remember to keep your dressing clean and not to immerse your hand in water until your sutures have been removed). Over time, slowly begin to use your hand more and for other tasks as tolerated.

By 2 weeks post surgery you should be able to use your hand for most normal day to day tasks.

You are able to drive as soon as pain allows and you are safe to control the vehicle.

It is very important not to overuse your hand following surgery, as this may delay your healing. If, after using your hand in daily activities, you notice a significant increase in your pain or swelling you should reduce your activities until your hand recovers.

In some cases it will take up to six months for your strength to return. In severe cases, your strength may not return to what it was before you developed Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

What to look out for:

If you experience any of the following symptoms in the weeks following surgery, please contact your surgeon or therapist:

- Persistent Pain or swelling
- Significant stiffness in the wrist and fingers
- Scar Hypersensitivity and pain
- Inability to use your hand for daily tasks.

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