

Hand Therapy

Carpal tunnel syndrome – after surgery

What is it?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by pressure on the median nerve. The median nerve passes through the carpal tunnel in the wrist. The carpal tunnel is formed by bones of the wrist and a tough band of tissue called a ligament.

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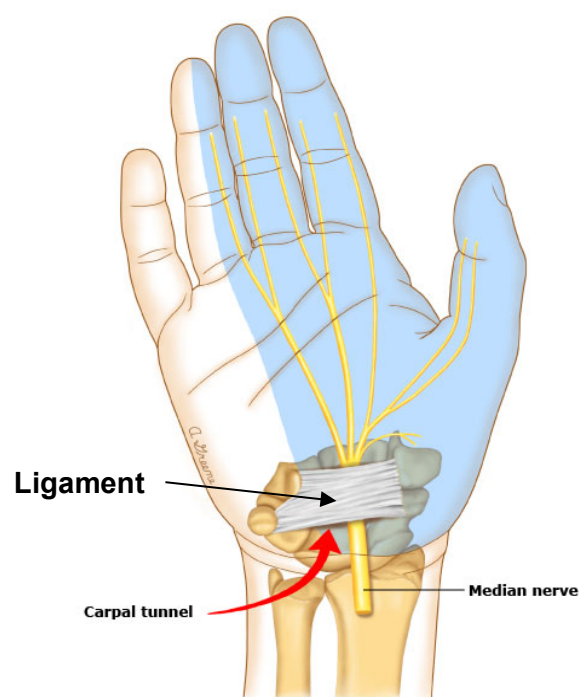
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What are the common symptoms?

Pressure on the median nerve can cause pain, tingling, numbness, weakness and/or clumsiness.

What is involved with surgery?

You may be given either a local or general anaesthetic. Surgery involves cutting the ligament that forms the tunnel. This releases the pressure on the median nerve. The palm is then sutured closed.



What should I do after surgery?

For the **first four weeks** it is important to avoid:

- Powerful or long-lasting gripping or pinching.
- Repetitive tasks.
- Vibratory machines/tools (including the lawn mower).
- Heavy lifting.

Control swelling

- Keep your hand elevated above the level of your heart as much as possible. Pillows can help when sitting and lying. A sling is not routinely provided. Please talk to your doctor or therapist if you feel you need one.



Wound care

- Keep the wound clean and dry. Your doctor/therapist will advise you when the wound is able to get wet.
- Using baby wipes to clean your hands can help keep your dressings dry.

Sensation

- A week or so after the stitches are removed gently touch and tap the scar. This will help to prevent pain caused by the nerves being too sensitive.
- If your scar becomes thick, red or painful, your doctor/therapist may be able to help.

Use of your hand

- It is important to start using your hand for **light** activities as long as these activities do not cause too much discomfort.
- Please avoid strong grip in the first week after surgery. After the first week, you can slowly increase the use of your hand as pain allows.
- You may be able to return to work on light duties as soon as you feel ready. Please talk to your doctor.

Exercises

- Gentle hand and wrist exercises are important to decrease swelling and stiffness. Please follow those provided by your doctor or therapist.
- After surgery your body makes scar tissue. This is a normal part of healing. Sometimes the tendons and nerves can become caught in this scar tissue. Exercises can help decrease the likelihood of this occurring.
- Strengthening exercises can be started at 4 weeks after the surgery as pain allows. Do not do these exercises earlier as they may damage the structures within the carpal tunnel.

Pillar pain

- Around 4 to 6 weeks after surgery you may experience an increase in pain over your scar when you grip an item, lean on surfaces or push to stand with your hand. This pain is normal and will generally reduce 8 to 12 weeks after surgery. Try to slowly increase the pressure on your hand during daily activity as pain allows.

Please contact your therapist if you have any questions or concerns.

Therapist _____ Phone Number _____

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