

Wichita Mountain

Neurosurgery

& Spine

by David M. Pagnanelli, M.D.

What to expect after Carpal Tunnel Release

Here are some guidelines for immediately after surgery:

- 1) Lidocaine and Marcaine, local anesthetics, have been injected into your hand, for the surgery to take place. This will keep the incision and your hand numb for several hours.
- 2) If you received intravenous sedation, you may feel drowsy for several hours.
Do not drive for 24 hours!
- 3) If the wrapping on your operated hand(s) feels too tight, loosen or remove it for your comfort. If you remove it, place a Band-Aid over the incision and keep it dry.
- 4) Elevate the operated hand for 24-48 hours.
- 5) Keep an ice pack on the palm and wrist for 24- 48 hours. Ice reduces pain and swelling.
- 6) Use acetaminophen (Tylenol), aspirin, or ibuprofen for pain. If pain is unrelieved, use the medication that has been prescribed. Ice will give the best relief.
- 7) If you haven't already done so, remove the bulky dressing after 24 hours, and replace with a Band-Aid.
- 8) Keep the incision dry until the stitches are removed. Tape plastic over the incision when showering. Change the Band-Aid 2-3 times daily ...
ESPECIALLY IF THE INCISION GETS WET.
- 9) **USE YOUR FINGERS IMMEDIATELY.** Resume as many daily activities as comfort permits. If it feels O.K., you can do it. Overuse, however, will cause pain.
- 10) Call the office to make an appointment for suture removal or with problems: 580-531-4600. Sutures should be removed 7-10 days after surgery.

What are the results of Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery?

In the days following, there is usually a varying degree of discomfort, alleviated by ice, Tylenol or propping the wrist on pillows at night. You may use plenty of ice--more helpful than pain pills-- on the days following the procedure. The hand, or hands, may be used to the extent that this does not cause inordinate discomfort.

One week after surgery your sutures will be removed. Two to four weeks after surgery most patients will be able to resume all activities of daily living, including return to work

Surgical Treatment Statistics

I have performed over 3000 Carpal Tunnel Release operations, In 1,200 patients, surgery was performed on both hands at one trip to the operating room. I have produced three professional publications on my results of Carpal Tunnel Release. The results of my patients' questionnaires indicate that the overwhelming majority claim "Excellent" or "Good" results regarding relief from pre-operative pain and discomfort. Most patients had full use of their hands in one week or less. Postoperative physical therapy was infrequently needed, and no wrist splints were required. No injury to the median nerve or its branches was noted. Most patients were back to work in three weeks or less. Many opted to have both hands taken care of in one visit to the operating room to cut down on recovery time.

Risks and Possible Complications

When getting a nerve out of a tight spot, it is always possible to injure the nerve. In this case that would result in an increased numbness and/or weakness in the hand. Any of the blood vessels or tendons in the area could also be injured. Most patients have chronic tendonitis &/or arthritis as an underlying problem. These problems will NOT get better after a carpal tunnel release, and the symptoms coming from these problems will remain. And occasionally surgery will make the symptoms of arthritis worse.

Wound infection, or a blood clot in the surgery site are possibilities. Nerves of diabetics are particularly sensitive to manipulation and compression. They are therefore more likely to be injured during any surgical procedure. All of these complications are rare, but do occur. More than 90% of carpal tunnel release patients experience a good result, but a good outcome can **never** be guaranteed. My personal statistics show an infection and recurrence rate of <1%. To the best of my knowledge I have never cut or injured the median nerve at surgery.

Prior to surgery you should review your expected outcome with me, and please be sure your questions have been answered to your satisfaction.