

Patient information

Care of your hand after carpal tunnel decompression

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a condition caused by compression of the median nerve at the wrist. The median nerve is responsible for supplying sensation to the index and middle finger and thumb and some of the small muscles in the hand.

Symptoms often include pins and needles, altered sensation and weakness in the hand and clumsiness. Often symptoms are exacerbated at night when sleeping in a curled position.

Treatment

Surgical treatment is indicated if there is severe compression of the median nerve or if conservative treatments such as splinting, steroid injections, stretches don't improve the symptoms.

The surgery relieves the pain by reducing the pressure on the median nerve. Surgery usually takes place as a day case and normally takes between 4-6 weeks to recover from.

After your surgery

Please leave the dressing intact, keeping it clean and dry.

After 48 hours remove the bandages and padding but leave the small white dressing in place. The dressing can be changed if it becomes loose or dirty.

You may experience some mild to moderate pain. This can be relieved by taking painkillers. Should any bleeding occur, apply moderate pressure and raise your hand.

You may experience some swelling in your fingers and hand, this is normal. To

help relieve this please keep your hand elevated for 48 hours and then avoid leaving it hanging down for long periods of time.

Stiches will be removed between 10 - 14 days following your surgery, either by your practice nurse or in orthopaedic clinic.

- Make an appointment with your practice nurse on and you will receive a telephone consultation approximately two weeks after surgery.
- Wait for appointment from the orthopaedic clinic

Exercises

- Move your shoulder and arm regularly
- Gently clench and unclench your hand
- Touch each finger in turn with your thumb
- Slow and gentle movement of the wrist forwards and backwards

Scar care

Once the stitches have been removed and your scar has healed you can start massaging the area to reduce any tightness and thickening. Use an un-perfumed cream and rub in a circular motion over the scar. It is the massage of the underlying scar tissue which reduces the scarring not the cream itself.

Function

You can use your hand straight away but you need to keep it clean and dry until the wound has healed. Gradually build up use in your hand, avoiding any repetitive movements or over gripping and heavy lifting in the early stages of healing.

To aid prevention of a recurrence of the symptoms consider the following:

- Maintain wrist in a neutral position when using your hand
- Avoid a sustained grip or pinch, particularly if the wrist is in a flexed position
- Avoid repetitive overuse of the wrist in activity
- Avoid positioning the wrist in a flexed position while sleeping

Contact your GP or GP out-of-hours service if:

- You experience severe pain.
- Any bleeding does not stop by the method suggested.
- Your wound becomes red, hot or produces a discharge, you may have an infection.

If you require any further advice or concerns, please contact the Upper Limb Nurse Practitioner on 01284 713924 or the Martin Corke Day Surgery Unit on 01284 713050 between 8.00am – 6.00pm.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>