



POST-OPERATIVE CARPAL TUNNEL RELEASE PROTOCOL

Recently, you had hand surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome. At the time of surgery, the transverse carpal ligament was released, opening up and decompressing the carpal canal. You are at an important phase of your post-operative recovery. It is important you follow these guidelines to ensure you regain maximum function and use of your hand.

Wrist Brace

The removable wrist brace is very important to prevent wrist flexion.

1. The wrist is allowed free motion from side to side and backwards, but wrist flexion (forward bending) is **not allowed** for a total of 6 weeks post-operatively.
2. The wrist brace is to be worn every night for a total of 6 weeks following surgery. The splint should continue to be worn at night to prevent recurrence of symptoms.
3. During the first 2 weeks following removal of the surgical dressing, the wrist brace should be worn most of the time during the day. It should be removed for bathing and while you are performing your home therapy program.
4. In the 3rd and 4th weeks following dressing removal (this will be the 5th and 6th weeks post-operatively), the wrist brace should be worn approximately half the time. For example, 2 hours off and 2 hours on. During this time, progressive increased range of motion is allowed.
5. **No heavy lifting or gripping** until 6 weeks after surgery.

Tendon Gliding Exercises

At the time of your surgery, the carpal canal was opened. With some patients, the tendons were stripped of inflammatory tissue i.e., tenosynovectomy. It is important that the tendons move individually; specific exercises will be given for individual finger movements to help prevent complications by adherence of these tendons.

Desensitization and Wound Softening

You will be instructed in the techniques of wound softening, massage and desensitization as part of your rehabilitation. It is important that these techniques be performed on a repetitive basis, at least 5 - 10 minutes, 5 times per day. Modalities such as ultrasound, paraffin or fluidotherapy are often used to facilitate desensitization and wound softening.

Grip Strengthening

At 5 - 6 weeks post-operatively, you will be started on a "gradual" grip strengthening program that needs to be repeated 5 times per day. Do not start squeezing a tennis ball or other hand-immobile objects. Soft "squeezes" are allowed at 5 - 6 weeks.