

Endoscopic Carpal Tunnel Surgery Post-operative Instructions

Wound Care:

- The dressing over your wrist helps protect the incision site.
- When showering or bathing, cover the dressing and your hand with a plastic bag to keep everything dry.
- Elevate your hand above your heart as much as possible to lessen swelling and pain. Pillows and blankets under the arm are helpful when you go to sleep.
- 72 hours after surgery, you may remove the dressing and apply a small band-aid on the incision. There are steri-strips over the incision. These will fall off on their own. The suture is underneath the skin and will dissolve over time.
- After the dressing comes off, you may shower without covering the incision, but do not soak your hand in the bathtub, swimming pool, or sink. If your incision is red, foul-smelling, or there is drainage coming from it during daytime hours, call the office right away.

Medications

- If you received a peripheral nerve block by anesthesia – this will wear off within 12-24 hours.
- As the block wears off, you should begin to take oral pain medication as prescribed.
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication (Norco, Percocet, Vicodin) for a short period of time – this can be taken as per the directions on the bottle. • It is not uncommon for patients to encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery. This is the time when swelling peaks. Using the pain medication as prescribed will help control pain with little risk of complication. Please avoid Tylenol while taking narcotic pain medications.
- You may have been prescribed Toradol for the first 3-5days after surgery. Take this medication scheduled as directed. This will help to decrease inflammation and decrease pain. Do not take any other NSAIDs (Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, etc) while on this medication.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation – to decrease the side effects, take medication with food, drink lots of fluids and follow a high fiber diet. A stool softener can also be prescribed for you if necessary to prevent constipation (colace or senakot).
- If you are having significant problems with pain control, nausea/vomiting, or constipation, please contact us for further instructions.
- You should resume your normal medications for other conditions the day after surgery, unless instructed differently by your physician.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication. Driving while under the influence of narcotic pain medication is dangerous and discouraged in all patients.
- We are unable to re-fill prescription pain medications after hours or on weekends. If you will need a re-fill in addition to the amount already prescribed for you, please call our office during normal business hours 2- 3 days before your prescription medications run out so we may re-fill them for you prior to running out

Ice Therapy

- Begin using an ice pack immediately after surgery. Icing is very important for the first 5 to 7 days post operatively.
- While the initial post operative dressing is in place, icing should be continuous. Once the dressing is removed on the 3rd day, ice should be applied for 20 minute periods, 4 to 6 times a day.
- Remember to keep operative extremity elevated during icing. Care must be taken with icing to avoid frost bite to the skin. Do NOT apply ice directly to the skin.

Activity:

- Wear your removable wrist brace for comfort.
- You can use your hand for activities of daily living, such as eating, writing, typing, getting dressed, brushing teeth, combing your hair, preparing food, and other light activities. Use of a squeeze ball or silly-putty can help with your motion and grip strength.
- Do not lift anything heavier than a cup of coffee or full soda can (about 1-2 lbs) until follow up.
- Avoid heavy repetitive activities for the first 4 weeks such as hammering or weight lifting as these may increase scarring and may lead to prolonged recovery.
- You may do light aerobic exercises 2-3 days after surgery.

Follow-Up Plan

- When you leave the surgery center, you should have a follow-up already set up with our office. This is typically between 1-2wks from surgery.
- During your first follow up visit, I will determine whether you need to see the occupational therapist

Results

- Most patients who have carpal tunnel release regain full use of their hand, with full motion and return of strength within about 4 weeks after their surgery. Some pain or numbness may persist even with surgery.