

Advice following carpal tunnel release surgery

i Information for patients
The Sheffield Hand Centre



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet as you have had an operation to release your carpal tunnel(s). Most of our patients now have their follow up care after surgery in the community. This means you are unlikely to be given a routine appointment to be seen again at The Sheffield Hand Centre.

We have provided the following information to help you understand what to expect and when to seek help. We hope you will find this useful and we wish you a good recovery.

What can I expect following my operation?

The local anaesthetic will wear off a couple of hours after your operation and you may start to feel some discomfort. The pain is likely to be stronger during the first few days but it should settle down quite quickly during the following couple of weeks. Simple painkillers, such as paracetamol, should help with this.

There will be a small wound on your wrist held together with stitches (sutures). There will be a large bandage on your hand after your operation.

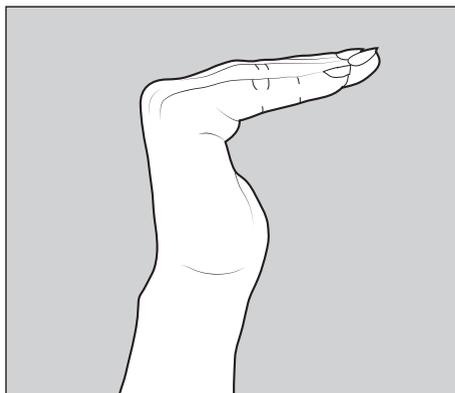
Is there anything I can do to help my recovery?

Your hand may be swollen so it is important to keep it raised above your heart for the first couple of days. This will reduce the swelling and will help with the pain. It can be done by using a sling or by sitting with pillows or cushions so that your hand is level with your shoulder. You can also lie with your hand across your chest on a pillow or cushion.

It is important to move your fingers and thumb regularly after your operation, even if they feel stiff. These exercises will help with the range of movement in your hand:

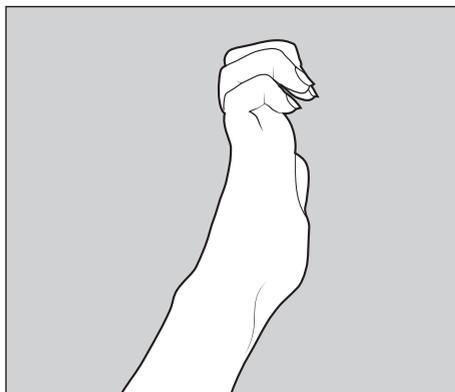
Keeping your fingers straight, bend at the knuckles and return to a flat hand.

Repeat 5-10 times as pain will allow.

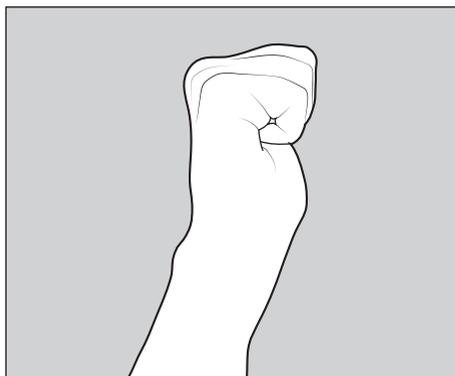


Bend the tips of your fingers and the middle joints, then straighten.

Repeat 5 -10 times as pain will allow.



Make a fist, then straighten your fingers 5 -10 times as pain will allow.



When and where will I have my stitches removed?

Before going home the nurse will tell you when you will need to have your stitches removed. This is usually 10-14 days after the operation. Your stitches will be removed by your Practice Nurse at your GP surgery.

You will be given a letter to take with you to let the Practice Nurse know what operation has been done and the type of stitches you have. Your stitches can be removed by your GP Practice Nurse 10-14 days after the operation. You will need to make this appointment as soon as possible after being discharged from the hospital.

What should I look out for after my operation?

Please contact the Hand Centre, or out of hours contact the Surgical Assessment Centre if:

- you experience bleeding through your dressing that does not stop despite raising your hand and applying continuous firm pressure on your dressing for 10 minutes
- your thumb or fingers change colour, have altered sensation, or feel cold to touch

Please seek medical attention via an urgent GP appointment or at a Walk-in Centre if:

- your wound becomes red, hot and swollen. This may indicate that you have a wound infection, which can be treated with antibiotics.

How long will I be off work?

The length of time will vary from person to person depending on what type of work you do. If you require a sick note please ask your surgeon or one of the nurses before you are discharged from hospital.

When can I return to normal activities?

Keep your hand clean and dry until the stitches have been removed. Your hand can be used for light activities a couple of days after your surgery. You can build up to normal activities in the next week or two but should avoid heavy lifting for at least a month.

When can I drive after my operation?

This will vary depending on your specific case. It is advisable to check with your surgeon and your own car insurance provider.

What can I expect over the next few weeks?

- Scar tenderness is usually temporary and is helped by regular massage with a moisturising cream. Sometimes it can take a few months to completely settle down.
- Aching pain in your hand is not uncommon for the first 3 months.
- It usually takes around 3 months to regain full strength and a comfortable scar. If you are struggling with symptoms, please arrange a GP appointment for a review of your pain medication and, if necessary, a further sick note.
- In severe cases of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, improvement in your numbness and weakness may take a long time, or, your hand may never fully recover.
- If you have continued pain or unexpected numbness more than 3 months after surgery, please ask your GP to arrange a review in the Hand Centre with your Hand Surgeon.

Who should I contact if I have any concerns or queries?

If you have a problem or need advice after going home please contact:

- your GP, or
- local Walk-in Centre, or
- phone the NHS helpline on **111**

The Sheffield Hand Centre

- **0114 305 2364**
7.00am – 7.30pm, Monday – Friday
7.00am – 3.00pm, Saturday

Outside of these hours, when the Hand Centre is closed, please ring:

The Surgical Assessment Centre

- **0114 226 9400**



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