

Patient Education

Hand Center/Bone and Joint Center



After Your Endoscopic Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery

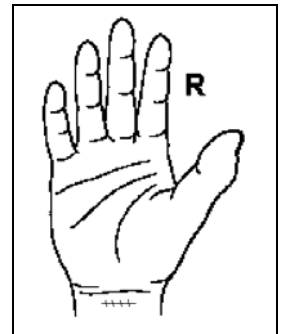
Self-care and follow-up

This handout explains follow-up care after endoscopic surgery to release your carpal tunnel.

If your incision is red or there is drainage coming from it, call us right away at the phone numbers listed on the next page. Go to the emergency room if this occurs at night or on a weekend.

Wound Care

- The incision for this type of surgery is fairly small. It runs along the wrist crease.
- After surgery, your hand and wrist will be placed in a bulky *dressing* (bandage). This helps protect the incision site and lessens swelling.
- 2 days after surgery, you may remove the dressing and yellow gauze from your incision. Put a small bandage over the sutures to keep them from getting caught on your clothes or other fabrics.
- Do **not** put any ointment or lotion on your wound.
- Keep the wound dry for 4 days by covering your hand with a plastic bag when you shower. After 4 days, you may shower without covering the incision, but do **not** soak your hand in a bathtub, hot tub, kitchen sink, swimming pool, etc.
- Your wrist and palm may swell. Use an ice pack for up to 20 minutes at a time over the surgical site to help control swelling. Be sure to place a thin cloth between your skin and the ice pack to protect your skin.
- Elevate your hand as much as possible to lessen swelling and pain.



The incision site shown on the wrist of a right hand.

Pain Management

- You will receive a prescription for narcotic pain medicine. Take this medicine only if you need it.
- Be sure to talk with the clinic nurse about how to take your pain medicine. To best manage your pain, you must take your pain medicine the way it was prescribed. Taking the correct dose at the right time is very important.

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Questions or Concerns?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Call the Hand Center at **206-598-4263**.

After office hours and on weekends and holidays: Call the hospital operator at **206-598-6190**. Ask for the Hand Fellow on call to be paged. Your call will be returned.

For more information, please visit the Hand Center online at www.uwhand.com.

- If you have uncomfortable side effects from the pain medicine, call the nurse at 206-598-4263.
- Please see “Medications After Surgery” for more instructions.

Driving

- Do **not** drive if you are taking narcotic pain medicine. It is not safe. The medicine can make you sleepy and delay your reaction time.
- Once you are no longer taking the medicine, you may drive as soon as you can comfortably grip the steering wheel with both hands.

Activity

- You can use your hand for light daily activities such as driving, getting dressed, typing, etc.
- Do not lift objects heavier than a full soda can (about 1 pound or .45 kilogram) until the sutures have been removed.
- Avoid heavy repetitive activities such as hammering. These will increase scarring and may lead to a longer recovery time.
- You may do light aerobic exercises as soon as 1 or 2 days after surgery. Avoid any heavy lifting, such as weight lifting, until 4 weeks after surgery.

Follow-up

Before you leave the surgery center you should have a follow-up appointment in the Hand Center already set up for 10 to 14 days after surgery. At this visit:

- Your sutures will be removed.
- You may also be referred to physical therapy to go over exercises to lessen scarring around the incision and to help increase your hand’s strength and range of motion. One therapy visit is usually enough to teach you a home exercise program.
- Once your sutures are removed, you can increase your activities as tolerated. Avoid heavy repetitive activities until 4 weeks after surgery.

Results

Most patients who have endoscopic carpal tunnel surgery regain full use of their hand, with full return of motion and strength.

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