Day Surgery

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

The advice in this leaflet is to help you prepare for and make a speedy recovery from your operation. Please take the time to read it as it contains advice and information you will find helpful.

Please note that it is advisable for you to have someone to take you home on your day of operation.

Please be aware that your visit to the hospital may involve a 4 to 5 hour stay, so bring something to read.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

This condition arises when there is a compression of the median nerve in the wrist. It often occurs without any obvious cause, but may be associated with arthritis or other endocrine problems. Swelling in the wrist joint or in the tendons that lie next to the nerve may squeeze the nerve as it passes through a tunnel (the carpal tunnel) at the wrist. An electrical test may confirm the diagnosis.

The condition may respond to simple measures such as wearing a splint. However, surgery may be required if there are persistent symptoms of weakness, pins and needles or loss of feeling in the thumb, index and middle fingers, or numbness and pain at night that prevents sleep. Surgical treatment can be effective in reducing the pressure on the nerve — offering relief of discomfort or pain—although the return of normal feeling may take some time. In some instances the sensation may never return back to normal even after an adequate surgical release as the nerve may show some damage following prolonged external pressure.

Carpal Tunnel Decompression/Release (Local Anaesthetic)

Surgery for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is most often carried out under a local anaesthetic.
This involves giving you a small injection to freeze the skin over your wrist. The operation is then performed with you awake but you should not feel pain. This should allow you to go home soon after the procedure.

- The doctor will ask you to keep quite still while the injection is given.
- The anaesthetic may initially sting when it is first given, but this soon goes away as the numbing effect takes place.
- You may notice a warm tingling feeling as the anaesthetic begins to take effect.
- Your operation will only go ahead when you and the doctor are sure that the area is numb.
- You will remain alert and aware of your surroundings—if you wish, you may bring some music with you to listen to through your headphones.
- Your doctor and other staff in the operating theatre are always near to you and you can speak to them whenever you want to.

The local anaesthetic may take 4 to 5 hours to wear off completely.

Before your operation

Medication advice

Please **STOP** taking:

Warfarin 5 days before your operation. (You may recommence the day after.)

Clopidogrel 7 days before your operation. (You may recommence the day after.)

Aspirin 7 days before your operation unless otherwise advised. (You may recommence the day after unless otherwise advised).

Please take all other medications as normal.

Clothing

It is advisable to wear loose clothing (i.e. short / wide sleeves and coats / cardigans with wide sleeves) due to the bulky dressing on your hand. You will not have to undress for this procedure if you are wearing a short sleeved, loose top.

Jewellery

Please remove all jewellery from the hand(s) to be operated on. If you are unable to remove rings they can be cut off either by a jeweller before your admission, or on the Day Surgery Unit on the day of your operation.

Advice following carpal tunnel surgery

You may feel some discomfort when the numbing injection wears off. You can take any type of painkillers you are used to (e.g. Paracetemol).

If you have no painkillers it is recommended that you purchase either Paracetemol or Co-codamol — please ensure that you have no allergy to either.

Looking after your wound

There may be a small amount of bleeding, swelling or discomfort where your stitches are. Don't worry, this is normal. If the wound does ooze slightly, apply pressure with a clean tissue (for at least 10 minutes).

All wounds go through several stages of healing, and you may be able to see these changes as they progress:-

- Clot formation
- Formation of new blood vessels
- Formation of new tissue

The following often occur and are normal:-

- A sensation such as tingling or slight itching
- A slight lumpy feeling as the new tissue forms
- Slight pulling around your stitches as the wound heals
- Bruising around the site of the wound

The dressing

You will have a bulky dressing on your hand immediately after your operation. This is to prevent bleeding and infection and will limit your activities for the period of time that it is on. This needs to remain on for 48 to 72 hours. **Keep your dressing clean and dry.** (We do **NOT** recommend that you put your arm in a sling.)

You will need to reduce the dressing on the third day. This can be done by your own GP or Practice Nurse. A lighter dressing can be applied to protect the wound. The dressing is not waterproof so it is important that you do not get it wet for the first two weeks. If it does get wet please remove the dressing — a wet dressing harbours infection and can make the wound site soggy, which does not help with healing — and reapply a clean dressing. Once the stitches have been removed you can get the wound wet.

Avoid the use of scented soap, talc or bubble bath around your wound as it can cause irritation. Ensure you carefully dry your wound after getting it wet by patting it gently with a clean towel.

Do not touch the wound and do not pull off the scab as it protects the underlying tissue.

Your stitches

Following your surgery you will have an incision over your wrist with stitches in place. These will remain in for up to two weeks. **The stitches will need to be removed by your own GP or Practice Nurse. You will need to either call in at the surgery or telephone them to arrange an appointment to have your stitches removed in 12 to 14 days.**
Please contact your GP surgery to make an appointment within three days of your surgery. Please do not turn up without an appointment to have stitches removed, there may not be anyone available to take them out.

You may feel a slight pulling sensation when the stitches are removed.

In **exceptional circumstances** it may be possible to arrange for a District Nurse to visit you at home in order to remove the stitches. Please ask the staff **before** you leave the Day Surgery Unit if you require this facility.

What should I do to help my recovery?

Following the reduction of your bulky dressing, and before the stitches are removed, it is important for you to start to exercise your hand. This will help to prevent swelling and begin to improve movement and strength in your hand.

Exercise your fingers every hour to prevent stiffness.

When sitting down, rest your arm on a pillow, ideally at a height above your chest. This minimises the risk of swelling.

Avoid activities such as typing for 3 weeks.

Do not lift or handle heavy objects with the operated hand for four to six weeks.

Work

You may need 10 days to 2 weeks off work, depending on the amount of activity involved in your job. If you require a sick note for your employer, please ask for one at the time of your admission.

Driving

You are advised against driving whilst the bulky dressing is still on (at least 48 to 72 hours). Please check with your own insurance company for advice as to when you would be valid to drive whilst you still have stitches in.

Possible complications

If you experience any of the following it may be an indication of infection:

- Feeling hot and feverish
- Redness around your wound
- Offensive odour or discharge
- Pus or blood from your wound

These symptoms are uncommon but can easily be treated by your own GP, from whom you should seek advice.

Some pain, swelling and bruising is to be expected around your wound initially.

If after the initial 4 to 5 hours following the procedure you experience the following:-

- Numbness
- Blue fingers
- Pins and needles
- Cold fingers

first make sure that you are not letting your hand 'dangle'—raise it up and exercise your fingers. If the symptoms persist you will need to contact your own doctor immediately.

The Scar

After the stitches are removed there will be a scar over your wrist. The scar will be red at first but will become paler with time. Patients of Asian or Afro-Carribean origin may find that their skin loses some pigment (colour) or the pigment may become darker. In some patients the scar may become stretched or thickened (keloid). This is due to individual susceptibility — every patient is different — there is no way we can know if this will happen. Every effort will be made to keep scarring to a minimum.

The scar over your wrist is often very sensitive to touch and sometimes painful on movement. It is necessary to reduce this to allow you to use your hand properly. It may take up to 3 months for the scar to mature and stop hurting. You can desensitise the scar.

This can be done by:-

1. Gently massaging the scar with a little hand cream.
2. Brushing and tapping the scar with your fingertips.
3. Stretching the scar by exercise.
4. Using the hand for normal activities.

Exercises

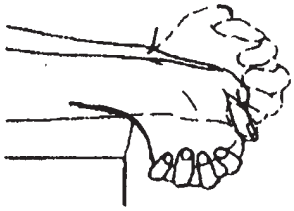
Your hand may be weaker as a result of the nerve being trapped at the wrist. It is therefore necessary to regain good grip strength in your hand.

The following exercises will help to stretch the scar, mobilise and strengthen your hand. Remember that it is normal for the scar to be tender but it will settle down in time with use and exercise.

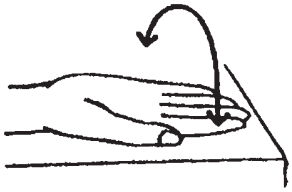
Here are some suggested exercises



Forearm supported on a table, hand relaxed over the edge. Extend the wrist and clench your fist relax and let your hand drop.



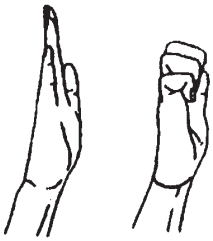
Clasp your hands together and support your forearms on a table with your hand over the edge.



Forearm on a table, palm turned down.
Alternatively turn palm up and down keeping elbow still.



Palm on a table.
Spread fingers and bring them together.



Fingers straight. Fingers hooked.



Put the back of your hand on a table.
Bring your thumb to the base of your little finger.
Bring your thumb back.



Hold all fingers straight.
Make a circle with your thumb.

A letter will be sent to your doctor informing him of the procedure you have had.

When you get home if you are concerned about anything, please contact your own doctor.

If you want to know more you may telephone the

Day Surgery Unit
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary
on (01484) 342111

or

Day Prodedure Unit
Calderdale Royal Hospital
on (01422) 223748 / 49

Smoking — Stop Before Your Op!

If you are a smoker and are going to have hand surgery you will be interested in the following! Although smoking causes all kinds of breathing and chest complications in having a general anaesthetic (being put to sleep) you may be unaware that smoking also has a direct effect upon wound healing. Smokers have slower healing wounds whether they are because of disease, injury or surgery.

This is because:

- Healing of wounds is helped by plenty of oxygen in the blood reaching them.
  Nicotine makes the blood vessels constrict (tighten) and reduces the blood flow to the wound. Carbon monoxide in smoke also reduces oxygen in the blood. The wound finds difficulty in healing as not only is the blood supply to it reduced, but there is also a low level of oxygen in the blood.
- Platelets, in the blood, are a vital element in the blood stream to help clotting.
  Nicotine makes the platelets “sticky” — leading to lots of small blood clots at the wound site, which reduces the blood flow to the area and slows down the healing. Nicotine also reduces the body’s ability to produce red blood cells which are vital for carrying elements for healing of scar tissue.

Reduced blood flow is a great concern for hand surgery because there are so many tiny blood vessels in the hands. Smoking a single cigarette can reduce the blood flow to the hand by 40% for up to an hour — which causes a severe shortage of oxygen needed for healing.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Day Surgery Unit
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary
Acre Street
Lindley
Huddersfield
HD3 3EA

Telephone No. (01484) 342111

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z www. danych kontaktowych

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪਾਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
براہِ مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"