



Carpal Tunnel Anatomy

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is due to compression of the median nerve within a bony tunnel that has a ligament across the top of it. Pressure on the nerve causes the nerve function to deteriorate. If left untreated this can cause permanent loss of sensation and wasting of the thumb muscles. Once the nerve is permanently damaged the recovery is obviously limited. There is a simple local anaesthetic day case procedure that can be performed to relieve the pressure on the nerve within the tunnel.

Carpal Tunnel Surgery

Local anaesthetic is injected around the site of the operation. Patients find that this is the most uncomfortable part of the procedure and the operation itself is not painful at all. The operation is performed with a tourniquet on the arm. This is a tight band around the arm which stops the flow of blood while the procedure is being carried out.

The time the tourniquet is on your arm is kept to an

absolute minimum for your comfort. The local anaesthetic that was injected in your hand can last for up to 12 hours. When sensation starts to return to the hand it is a good idea to take the tablets you have been given to take home, as the hand can be sore for the first day or two.

A bulky dressing is put on the hand initially but it is put on so that the thumb and fingers are left entirely free. This dressing is left on for five days. It can be removed at home without the supervision of a nurse or doctor. If the wound looks healthy, all we ask you to do is apply a self-adhesive dressing which is supplied by the hospital. You then need to keep the wound clean and dry for a further five days. At this stage it is safe to get the hand wet in a bath or shower. It is very common for the skin around the wound to become dry and an application of a moisturiser and regular massage will help the wound settle down.

Carpal Tunnel Surgery Recovery Time

Most patients are back driving a car about one week after surgery, so long as they are fully in control of the vehicle. Return to work depends on your occupation and you can discuss this with your surgeon. The stitches are absorbable and will fall out on their own within a few days of the wound being exposed. It is common to have both hands operated on at the same time. Because the bandages that are applied leave the thumb and fingers completely free, this does not cause significant problems. Most patients find that the unpleasant tingling they get at night time which wakes them up, settles immediately. Should you have had reduced sensation in the fingers this can take time to recover. If this has been long standing a full return of normal sensation cannot be guaranteed.

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