



SMITA R. RAMANADHAM, M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

Carpal Tunnel Surgery

Patient Care Instructions

General Information

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition brought on by increased pressure on the median nerve at the wrist. In effect, it is a pinched nerve at the wrist. Symptoms may include numbness, tingling, and pain in the arm, hand, and fingers. When symptoms are severe or do not improve, surgery may be needed to make more room for the nerve. Pressure on the nerve is decreased by cutting the ligament that forms the roof (top) of the tunnel on the palm side of the hand. This is done with a small incision in the base of your palm. This is an outpatient surgery that can typically be done at our outpatient surgery center.

Things to handle prior to your surgery

Avoid all NSAIDs (motrin, aspirin, ibuprofen, etc) for 7-10 days prior to procedure unless otherwise directed by your doctor. Continued use may cause bleeding.

Avoid all herbal medicine or supplements for 3 weeks prior to procedure. Continued use may cause bleeding.

Arrange for someone to drive you home from the hospital and stay with you for 1 day.

Necessary medications will be called into your pharmacy or given to you on the day of surgery.

Protein supplementation can be started one to two weeks before surgery and should include over 20 grams of additional protein daily.

Review the attached list of medications to avoid prior to surgery. If you have any further questions that were not addressed during your consultation then please call Dr. Ramanadham's office.

If you are unsure if you can stop medications then please call the prescribing provider to confirm if this is medically safe.

For your convenience, we have included a **Suggested Shopping List** in the addendum to these instructions

Pre-Operative Guidelines

Smoking should be stopped a minimum of 4 weeks prior to surgery. Smoking should be avoided for at least 4 weeks after surgery as well. Smoking can greatly interfere with healing and lead to postoperative complications.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. This includes no water, gum, or hard candy.

Blood pressure and/or heart medications can be taken with a sip of water as directed by your prescribing physician.

If you take medication for diabetes then confirm with your prescribing physician how to manage these medications prior to surgery.



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If you are prone to nausea or motion sickness let your anesthesiologist know on the day of surgery. Medications can be started prior to surgery or during surgery to help improve your postoperative experience.

Post-Operative Care

Take pain medication as prescribed. Tylenol alone can also be taken, please follow instructions on the bottle for dosing. The typically prescribed pain medication has Tylenol in it so this must be accounted for if taken. Do not drink alcohol with these medications.

Take a suggested stool softener/laxative until bowels begin to function normally after surgery. A combination of anesthesia and pain medication usually makes these necessary for a few days.

Keep your arm elevated above your heart level as much as possible until your first postoperative visit. Pillows can be used while in bed or sitting.

Follow a well-balanced diet, which includes protein and is limited in salt intake. A high salt diet or meal, can lead to increased swelling and prolonged recovery. It is best to continue the protein supplementation for approximately 3 weeks after surgery.

Oral hydration should include the use of electrolyte containing fluids such as Gatorade or a low calorie substitute. Limit the amount of caffeinated beverages as they can promote dehydration; however Dr. Ramanadham recommends you maintain your daily average of caffeine to avoid headaches.

Activity Restrictions

Walking is encouraged shortly after the operation and can be increased over the first 2 weeks. Light cardiovascular exercise can be resumed after 3 weeks and progressed as tolerated over the following 3 weeks.

Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 weeks.

Do not drive while taking any prescription pain medication.

Use your operated hand as needed, however, avoid strenuous activity or lifting with this hand. Typing and writing are okay.

Incision Care

You will have sutures in place that will be removed in 14 days.

You may shower after the operation, but the dressing should remain dry and in place for 2 days. You can use a plastic bag to protect it in the shower.

The dressing can be removed in 2 days. At that point, warm soapy water can run over the incision. Do not scrub or soak the incision.

If desired, a dry dressing or band-aid can be replaced daily after you shower.



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What to Expect after Carpal Tunnel Surgery

You may notice the sensation that your hand fell asleep (numbness/burning) in the first 1-3 days after surgery. This is likely due to swelling. To relieve this, loosen the outer ACE wrap dressing and elevate hand at all times.

It can take weeks to months for the nerve symptoms to resolve. In some situations not all symptoms resolve.

Typically, the waking at night with a numb hand resolves first.

Pain around the incision may remain for approximately 6 or more weeks.

You can expect some slight oozing (bloody) from the stitch lines and swelling of the incisions. Gauze can be reapplied if it is bothersome.

You may be referred to an occupational therapist for further therapy or scar treatment.

When to Call the Office

If you have increasing redness or swelling around the incision.

If you have severe pain not relieved by pain medication.

If you have any side effects from the medication: rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.

If you have fever over 101.

If you have yellow or greenish drainage from an incision or notice a foul odor.

For medical questions, please call Dr. Ramanadham's office.

Follow-up Care and Appointments

You will be seen by Dr. Ramanadham approximately 10 to 14 days after the surgery. Sutures will be removed in 10 to 14 days.

You will be seen again at 6 weeks.

For medical questions, please call.



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Suggested Shopping List

Items to have on hand prior to surgery

Carpal Tunnel Surgery

- Prescriptions will be called into your local pharmacy as ordered by Dr. Ramanadham or given to you on the day of surgery. Typical medications are as follows but these will be tailored to your needs.
 - Norco or tramadol or equivalent (pain medication)

- Tylenol

- Gatorade or another low calorie alternative, such as water with electrolytes

- Protein Supplements

- Stool softener / laxative (choose one):
 - Docusate (Colace) 100 mg orally twice daily when taking pain medication
 - Milk of Magnesia 30cc/1 Tablespoon twice daily when taking pain medication
 - Prune juice or Sorbitol orally
 - Biscodyl or Magnesium Citrate as needed for constipation