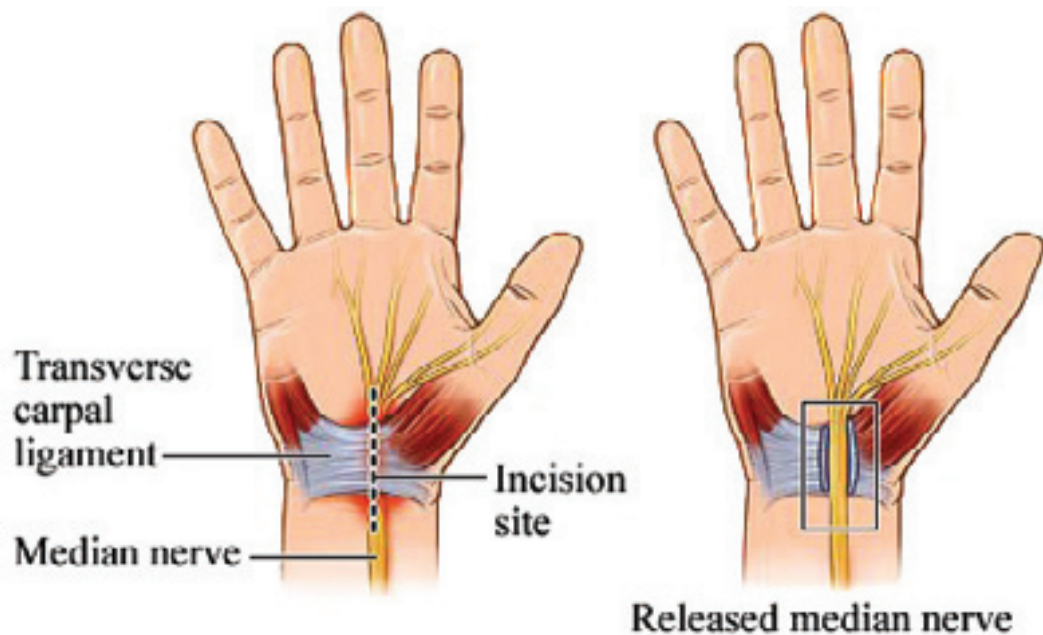


Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery



When is it Time to Think About Surgery?

You may need carpal tunnel release surgery if you are experiencing numbness, tingling, burning and weakness of the affected hand and fingers. You may also have radiating pain to your forearm, shoulder or neck. When these symptoms affect daily activities such as reading the paper and driving your car, or they cause you to lose sleep, it's usually time to consider having surgery.

Your doctor will order an electromyography test (EMG test) to diagnose this disorder and better understand the level of nerve irritation. This nerve irritation occurs when your median nerve at your wrist is compressed due to a decrease in the diameter of the tunnel or increased blood flow through the tunnel.

About the Surgery

When you have carpal tunnel release surgery, the doctor makes an incision at the base of the palm of your hand. The ligament across your wrist is cut, which takes the pressure off your median nerve. This procedure is done as an outpatient surgery and you will go home the same day with a splinted wrist in a bulky dressing.

Preparing for Surgery

You will have pre-admission testing done before your surgery to ensure that you are healthy enough for the planned procedure. Testing may include lab work, an EKG and a chest x-ray.

Anti-inflammatory medications, aspirin, and blood-thinning medications should be discontinued one week before your surgery. These medications affect your blood clotting factors and could increase your risk for bleeding.

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What to Expect After Surgery

You will find a bulky hard splint on your wrist and hand, and an IV in your opposite arm to replace your fluids. You will be in the recovery room after surgery until your vital signs are stable and you are awake.

Complications and Risks of Surgery

Bleeding: Please contact the office if your dressing/ band aide becomes saturated with blood.

Infection: Please contact the office if your wound develops a foul smell, drainage, increased swelling, redness, fever, or chills.

Painful scar formation: Tissue around your scar may heal tight and be uncomfortable. After 4 weeks you may massage the area to help break up this scar tissue.

Recurrence of symptoms: Your symptoms may not completely disappear after severe nerve damage has occurred. You may continue to experience some symptoms even after surgery.

Nerve damage: There is a slight risk that surrounding nerves may be damaged during carpal tunnel release surgery.

Recovery Period

Your recovery time will vary depending on the degree of nerve damage caused by the compression. Nerves typically regenerate an inch per month, so recovery may take 4-6 months. If nerve damage is severe the nerve may be irreparable, but surgery will prevent further nerve damage.

Returning to Work

Patients usually return to work approximately 3 days after their surgery with the restriction of using only their non-affected hand. You should not lift more than 5 lbs. or do any repetitive gripping, and you should avoid heavy use of your surgical hand for 4 weeks after your surgery. After 4 weeks you may return to regular duties.