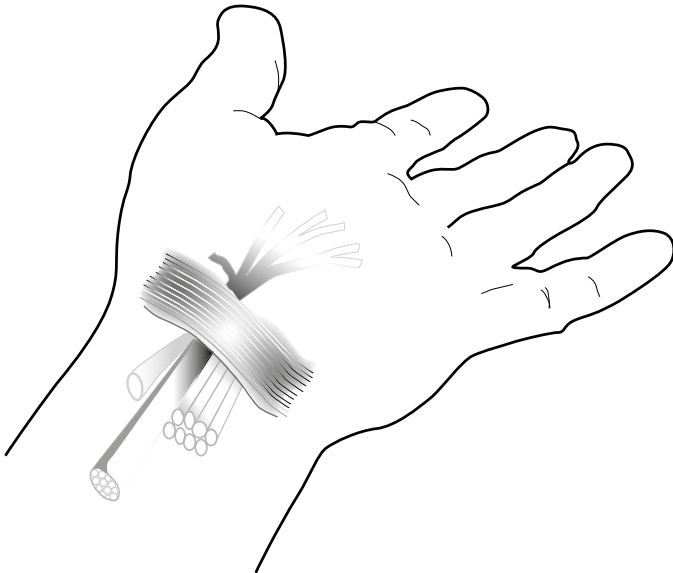


# Advice after having Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Surgery



## **What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?**

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) can cause symptoms of pain, pins and needles and, or numbness in the hand. It is caused by pressure on the median nerve as it passes into the hand at the level of the wrist.

The median nerve provides sensation to the thumb, index, middle and part of your ring finger. It also supplies a group of small muscles at the base of your thumb. The carpal tunnel is exactly that – a tunnel! The floor of the tunnel is made up of the small bones in your wrist and the roof by a soft tissue ligament.

This leaflet will give you some advice after having Carpal Tunnel Syndrome surgery.

Usually you will have surgery under a local anaesthetic in the Day Surgery Unit. This means that you are not put to sleep and you can usually go home the same day as your surgery.

The aim of surgery is to ease the pressure on the median nerve. The success of surgery depends generally on how badly the nerve has been squashed and for how long. In many cases the pins and needles improve quickly but full improvement may take up to a year.

Please remember that during surgery the nerve is not repaired but the surgery gives the nerve more space in which to recover. However, nerves behave unpredictably and not everyone will recover completely.

## **What to Expect After surgery**

You will have a padded bandage on your wrist and hand. Your stitches will be removed 10 -14 days after surgery. Before this, we may ask you to attend a nurse-led clinic or your practice nurse to have your wound checked and change your dressing.

During this period, if your wound has an unpleasant smell from

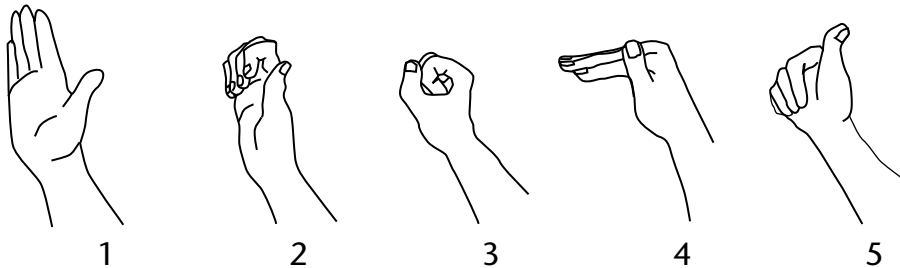
your wound, is throbbing or has severe swelling this could be a sign of infection. Please contact the clinic or your GP immediately.

## How to Care for Your Hand

Remember to keep your dressing clean and **do not soak your hand in water until your stitches have been removed and the wound is well healed.** Once your wound is completely closed and the stitches have been removed, begin massaging your scar and the surrounding area with moisturiser. Any non perfumed moisturiser is suitable. The massage will help to soften your scar, make it less sensitive and help with healing.

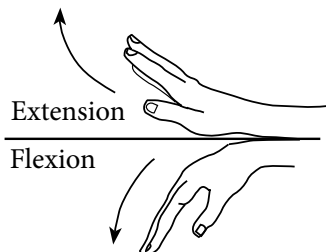
A hand therapist may show you some exercises which you should do 2-3 times every day.

### Exercise: 1 Tendon Gliding Exercises



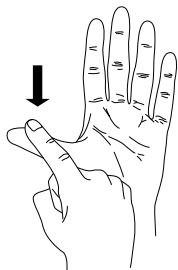
Go through positions 1 to 5 and repeat 10 times.

### Exercise 2: Gently bend your wrist back and forward.



Hold for 5 seconds in each position. Repeat 5 times.

### **Exercise 3: Stretch your thumb as far as comfortable using your other hand.**



Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 times.

These exercises should not be painful, although you may experience a little discomfort initially.

### **Moving and using your hand**

You may begin to use your hand for light tasks e.g. dressing, eating as soon as pain allows, but remember to keep your dressing clean and dry until your wound has completely healed. Over time, slowly begin to use your hand for other tasks as pain allows.

### **Driving**

You can return to driving when it is comfortable to do so. You must feel that you are in complete control of the car; it is your responsibility to check with your insurance company before returning to driving.

### **Time off work**

This will depend on your occupation and, or place of work. Light manual workers may be off work for 2-4 weeks whilst heavy manual workers may need at least 6 weeks. We advise that you avoid all heavy gripping, pinching etc for at least 6 weeks.

Contact Details:

Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

Nursing Support: \_\_\_\_\_

Hand therapy Support: \_\_\_\_\_