

Carpal Tunnel Release

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is extremely common. Symptoms can include numbness or pain in thumb through third finger that occurs at night, while driving, or while reading a book or newspaper. Also symptoms can include weakness in grip, pain radiating to the shoulder, and shrinking of the muscle at the base of the thumb. Conservative treatment is to wear a carpal tunnel splint for 18 hours a day. Basically, sleep in the splint plus whatever equals 18 hours for 6 weeks. These splints can be purchased at any drug store.

If this conservative treatment fails you should consider surgery. The procedure takes about 5 minutes and usually gives relief almost immediately. The incision is only about 1 1/4 inches long. It can be done under general anesthesia in the hospital. Or, if you want to avoid the hospital copayment and therefore save some money, it can also be done under local anesthetic in the office. I much prefer doing this as an in office procedure.

Postoperatively you will have a dressing which will be removed 48 hours after the procedure. You will then wash your hands with soap and water. The stitches come out about 10 days postop. Physical therapy is needed only about 10% of the time in my experience.

Postop Instructions

We certainly hope your Carpal Tunnel Surgery was pleasant enough. Here are some instructions to help your recovery:

1. Keep elevated
2. If you bleed through the dressing, ignore it. You can loosen it if you think it is too tight but don't uncover the wound.
3. Take your dressing off at 48 hours and wash your hands with soap and water.
4. Keep it clean but you are allowed to use your hand. No heavy gripping. Even while the dressing is on you are able to use your hand for activities of daily living.
5. If you can take Advil (Ibuprofen over the counter) take 4 every 8 hours for 48 hours. I may modify this for some. If you have kidney function problems let me know. Start the Advil as soon as you get home whether you hurt or not.
6. Take Tylenol Extra Strength 2 pills every 6 hours for 48 hours. You can take it longer but no more than 2 pills every 6 hours. If you have liver problems, do not take.
7. Please call our office for any concerns.

Thanks for allowing us to be involved in your care!

Stephen G. Littlejohn, M.D.