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Carpal Tunnel Release

Introduction

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common condition that causes pain, numbness, and tingling in the hand and arm. The condition occurs when one of the major nerves to the hand — the median nerve — is squeezed or compressed as it travels through the wrist.

If pressure on the median nerve continues, however, it can lead to nerve damage and worsening symptoms. To prevent permanent damage, surgery to take pressure off the median nerve may be recommended for some patients.

The Operation

You will be admitted on the morning of surgery and will be discharged the same day — usually 3- 4 hours after theatre.

During surgery I make a small incision in the palm of your hand. I then divide the transverse carpal ligament (the roof of the carpal tunnel). This increases the size of the tunnel and decreases pressure on the median nerve.

After surgery, the ligament may gradually grow back together—but there will be more space in the carpal tunnel and pressure on the median nerve will be relieved.

Possible Complications

There is always risks involved with surgery, but complications during carpal tunnel surgery are very rare. Possible surgical related problems include bleeding, infection and nerve aggravation or injury.

After the Surgery

You will be allowed to go home 3-4 hours after surgery provided you are comfortable and safe to

do so. Please do not attempt to drive on the day of surgery. Driving is allowed from the next day provided you feel safe to do so.

There will be a thick compressive bandage around the hand which must stay on for 7 days. This is to prevent haematoma formation. You must remove this bandage after 7 days, but try to keep the surgical dressing underneath as long as possible. If the dressing comes off, just keep the hand clean and dry until the stiches are removed at 3 weeks. These stiches are non-absorbable and MUST be removed please.

You should expect some pain, swelling, and stiffness after your procedure. Minor soreness in your palm may last for several weeks to several months.

Grip and pinch strength usually return by about 2 to 3 months after surgery. If the condition of your median nerve was poor before surgery, however, grip and pinch strength may not improve for about 6 to 12 months.

If you have significant pain and weakness for more than 2 months, I may refer you to a hand therapist who can help you maximize your recovery.

Occasionally, carpal tunnel syndrome can reoccur, although this is rare. If this happens, you may need additional treatment or surgery.

We wish you a speedy recovery

