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## CARPAL TUNNEL SURGERY POST-OPERATIVE CARE

We are pleased that you have chosen us to provide your neurosurgery care. Taking care of yourself after surgery is a key part of your recovery. This information will assist you with your post-operative care regarding activity and care of your wound.

### FIRST THREE DAYS

Your hand will have a bulky dressing and a short wrist splint applied to it immediately after surgery. Leave the dressing on your hand for the first three days after surgery.

- Your ability to use your hand will be limited.
- It is important to keep your hand elevated as much as possible. This elevation reduces swelling, allows the wound to heal faster and relieves pain. For example, while you are sitting on a couch, place your arm upon the back cushion as to elevate the arm and hand above the level of the heart. When lying down, keep your elbow and hand supported on a pillow or place the hand on the chest, once again to keep it above the level of the heart. While walking periodically place your hand on top of your head, again above the level of the heart as it will keep swelling to a minimum.
- A few small spots of blood on the dressing are normal after surgery. In the unlikely event there is more significant bleeding, apply direct manual pressure to the wound. Please call us or seek medical attention for any bleeding that is enough to soak a dressing.
- Keep your shoulder and the rest of your arm as mobile as possible, and move your shoulder through its complete range of motion three times a day to prevent it from getting stiff.

### DAY THREE AND AFTER

- Remove the bulky dressing and wrist splint on the third day after surgery. You can do this by unwrapping the dressing material, or carefully using scissors to cut the layers of dressing away from your wrist and hand. Your wound is closed with nylon sutures. The ends of the sutures will protrude from the skin at the edges of the incision. Please do not remove these suture ends. Your wound may also have small tape-like bandages called Steri Strips, do not remove these. However, if the Steri Strips loosen and fall off, do not be alarmed, this happens if they become wet.

We will remove the staples or sutures when we see you for follow-up in our clinic, generally 10 to 14 days after your surgery.

Change the dressing once a day, or as needed if it gets wet or soiled. The dressing can be a gauze pad secured with tape, or other type of wound dressing, such as a BandAid that is large enough to cover the wound. You will be given some gauze and tape at the time of your discharge.

- You may shower or bathe with your dressing covered with an occlusive type dressing. The easiest way to occlude water from your wound may be placing a plastic bag over the entire hand and sealed at the wrist with rubber band or similar closure. After the shower, blot the wound dry, and place a new dressing. Do not submerge your wound in any liquid until instructed that it is ok to do so.
- You do not need to elevate your arm or use the splint unless you find that this is more comfortable for you.
- You may be able to use your operated hand for some simple activities, such as holding or moving small, light objects. Limit lifting to a maximum of eight pounds for the first two weeks. Avoid significant or repetitive use of your operated hand until we see you for follow-up.
- Once the wound is well-healed you can gradually resume your normal activities with that hand.

### **DRIVING**

Do not drive until all pain medication has been stopped and a vehicle can be safely controlled. The incision in your hand can also impair your ability to operate your vehicle. If you feel it is unsafe to drive, have someone else drive for you. You need to use your best judgment in this regard.

### **PAIN MANAGEMENT**

Some incisional discomfort or pain may be expected after surgery. In order to minimize your discomfort, you will be given a prescription for a pain medication. Use your pain medication as directed. Pain medication use should decrease as the pain improves.

The pain of a surgical incision, like all injuries, can benefit from ice application. If needed, ice may be applied to the affected area 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off. Remember you can freeze your skin just like you can burn it so place a barrier like a thin towel or pillowcase between the ice and your skin.

Contact us during regular business hours 3-4 days before you run out of your medication. This gives us adequate time to generate, electronically transmit, and/or mail the prescription. Prescriptions that are required to be hand written can be picked up at our office during normal business hours or mailed to you. Prescription requests made on a Friday will not be available until the following week.

### **FOLLOW-UP CARE**

We will generally make an appointment to see you in our clinic 10- to 14 days after your surgery. If you leave the hospital without a follow up appointment please call our office to make an appointment.

Call with questions, concerns or changes in your condition. We would much rather know how you are doing, and try to answer your questions or concerns, rather than have you be uncertain or worried about how you are doing.

If you experience emergency or urgent conditions while you are at home, call 911. Otherwise, please contact us at 715-843-1000. Our office hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After hours, the contact number above will automatically connect to our paging service. Generally one of our physicians and/or physician assistants is on call for our practice. On rare occasions another physician may be providing coverage for our patients.

We hope this information is helpful, and thank you once again for allowing us to provide your surgical care.