

CARPAL TUNNEL RELEASE PROTOCOL

POST-OP WEEK 0-2:

Home Expectations:

1. Wound care:
 - a. Remove dressings 3-5 days after surgery.
 - b. Put wrist brace on after dressings are removed, if provided by your surgeon.
 - c. Keep the incision covered with waterproof bandages until follow up appointment.
 - d. No submerging in water or place ointments and creams on it.
2. Pain management:
 - a. Cryotherapy: Apply to surgical site to decrease post op edema and help with pain reduction. Use as often as needed.
 - b. Prescription pain medications as needed.
 - c. Elevation of surgical site above the level of your heart.

Therapy Goals:

1. Focus on movement to reduce swelling and stiffness.
2. Perform movement of fingers flexion and extension and gently making a fist several times a day.

POST-OP WEEK 2-3:

Home Expectations:

1. Keep the incision clean and dry.
2. Follow up with the Orthopedic Team (Physician Assistant) at 2 weeks post op.

Therapy Goals:

1. Strengthening: Introduce light resistance exercises using therapy putty or a soft stress ball.
2. Return to work: time varies, usually 2-3 weeks for light-duty work, longer for manual labor.
3. Activities levels: can be resumed within 2-4 weeks, although heavy lifting or repetitive tasks should be avoided for several weeks.

POST-OP WEEKS 3 +:

Home Expectation:

1. Wound care:
 - a. Start cross friction and circular motion massage of incision with Vitamin E or Scar oil, 2-3 minutes 3-4 times daily once the scar is healed to prevent scarring and to prevent tenderness.

Therapy Goals:

1. Modalities as needed for pain or persistent numbness
 - a. Ultrasound
 - b. Contrast (Heat to cold)
2. Nerve gliding exercises.

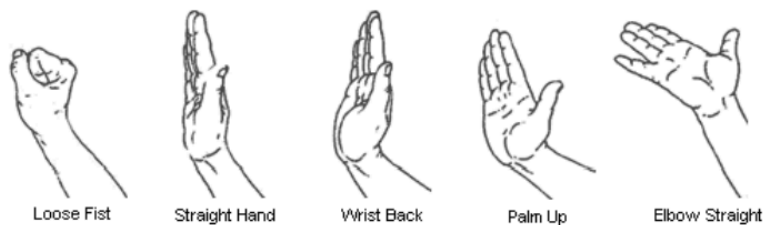
Now that you are 3 weeks post operatively, you should have most if not all of your range of motion back, but you will need to continue doing your tendon gliding exercises for at least the next 3 weeks, as your body continues to form scar.

Tendon Gliding Exercises



Perform this sequence of fists 10 repetitions, 5 times per day

Now that your incision is healed and we can be more vigorous with your wrist motion, it is important to glide the median nerve along its path to avoid it also being surrounded by scar tissue. That is done by performing this series of motions:



Repeat this sequence 5 repetitions, 5 times per day – Hold each position 10 seconds

This protocol provides you with general guidelines for the rehabilitation of Carpal Tunnel Release. Changes in the program are made as appropriate/indicated for each patient. Any further restrictions on the physician's order take precedence. If you have any questions regarding the patient and/or protocol, please send a message to the Little Falls Orthopedics Team or Physical Therapy Department at (320) 631-2205.