

GRIP

Hand, Wrist &
Reconstructive
Surgery

Carpal Tunnel Release

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

At the junction between the forearm and the palm of the hand, 9 tendons and a nerve (the median nerve) pass through a tunnel formed by bones and a fibrous band (the transverse carpal ligament).

In carpal tunnel syndrome, the median nerve does not have enough space in the tunnel. Symptoms fluctuate and vary. Most common symptoms include tingling or pain in the palm and fingers that can radiate up the forearm. In some cases, weakness of the hand becomes a problem, too.

Your operation

Carpal tunnel release surgery involves release of the fibrous band that forms the roof of the carpal tunnel through an incision in the overlying skin. This releases pressure of the median nerve. In some cases, swollen tissue around the tendons also needs to be removed (tenosynovectomy).

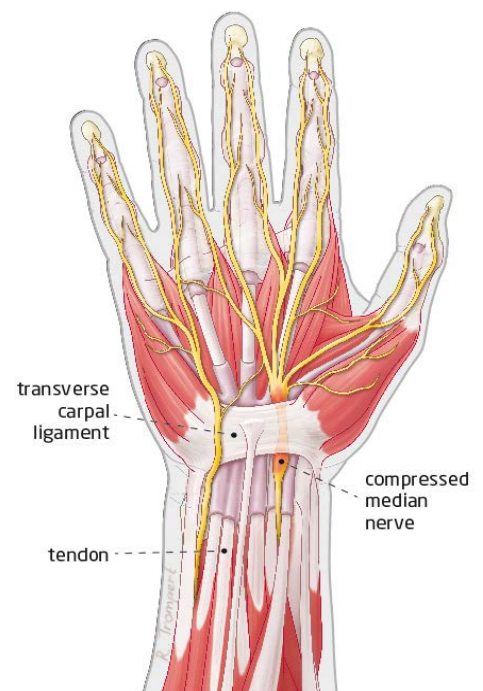
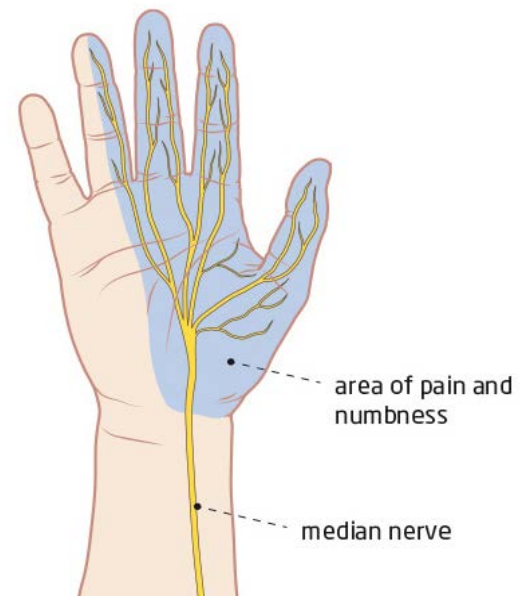
The procedure takes approximately 20 minutes and usually takes place as a day surgery, using sedation and a local anaesthetic. The incision will be closed with skin sutures. A tape bandage (Hypafix) will cover the wound under a soft hand dressing.

After the operation

Day of surgery: some or all of your fingers may feel numb or tingly for 6-36 hours due to the local anesthetic. You can start to move and use your thumb and fingers for light duties before you leave the hospital.

Day 1-5 after surgery: keep the soft dressing clean and dry. On day 4 or 5 after the operation, you can take the soft dressing off your hand, but keep the tape bandage on your skin intact.

Day 5-14 after surgery: the tape bandage can get wet under the shower or when washing your hand. Just dab it dry with a towel afterwards. If it comes off, use a simple bandaid to protect the sutures. Use your hand lightly as tolerated and avoid heavy duties.



Two weeks after surgery: your progress will be reviewed by the doctor or practice nurse. Skin sutures will be removed during this visit. If needed, a new tape bandage will be placed for another 3-5 days.

Six weeks after surgery: if needed, another follow up appointment will take place to monitor your progress.

Recovery

Most patients notice an improvement of symptoms and recover within the first 2 weeks. If your carpal tunnel syndrome existed for a long time or was severe, symptoms may take months to improve. It is not abnormal for the area around the scar to remain tender or swollen for 2 or sometimes 6 weeks after surgery. Moisturising and gentle massage of this area is helpful. If needed, you will be referred to a hand therapist to assist you with your recovery.

Potential complications

Carpal tunnel surgery is routine, safe and complications rarely occur. These complications can include: wound healing problems, infection, bleeding, bruising, nerve injury, ongoing tenderness around the scar or slower than expected recovery. Rarely, carpal tunnel syndrome symptoms do not improve or they may come back. This may require another procedure in the future.

Driving after surgery

General advice on driving after surgery:

- » there is no legislation that covers surgery and driving
- » you must be able to safely control your car well, even in an emergency situation
- » some insurers will not cover any damage or liability if you had "recent surgery", if you were wearing a splint or cast whilst driving, or were using (pain) medication that could affect your ability to drive
- » it is advisable to contact your insurer before you are planning to drive again after your surgery
- » check with your surgeon if driving may affect the outcome of your rehabilitation.

CONTACT

If you have any questions or have concerns after your surgery, please contact our rooms during office hours on **08 7127 0365**.

After hours, please contact Dr. Paul van Minnen by phone call or text message:

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Disclaimer: All information provided on this handout should be considered as general guidelines. Actual practice and (expected) outcomes may differ in your case.