



BARWON
PLASTIC SURGERY

Surgical Treatment of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common condition where pressure on the median nerve at the level of the wrist causes pain, numbness and weakness of the hand, sometimes radiating into the forearm. It can be brought on by activities such as driving, but often is more noticeable at night, with the individual waking with painful numb hands.

The Surgery

Open carpal tunnel surgery involves the release of the ligament overlying the median nerve at the wrist through a small 3-4cm incision. Carpal tunnel surgery is usually performed under sedation and local anaesthetic.

Risks

All surgical procedures carry risk. The following are potential risks of carpal tunnel surgery, there may be others that are not listed. This list is not meant to alarm, it is meant to inform, these will be discussed in more detail during the consent process.

- bleeding from the surgical site.
- infection of the surgical wound.
- damage to the median nerve or its branches.
- a scar that may be painful or sensitive.
- excessive swelling, stiffness, weakness or pain that may require prolonged hand therapy.
- complex regional pain syndrome, a condition that causes pain in the hand out of proportion to the surgery.

Day of the procedure

Carpal tunnel surgery is performed as a day case procedure. Further instructions about fasting, medication changes, and time you will be required to attend, will be provided by the hospital pre admission team before your surgery.

Post procedure and recovery

Wound: The Wound is covered with a small strip of tape and your hand is then wrapped in a crepe bandage for support and protection. These dressings should stay in place for 1 week and be kept dry. The sutures are dissolving. You will be discharged home with a sling to keep your hand elevated and protected.

Pain: Local anaesthetic will keep your wound and sometimes your hand numb for several hours after surgery. After the local anaesthetic has worn off you are likely to require additional analgesia (pain medication).

Recovery: After your carpal tunnel release recovery can vary depending on several factors including general health, age, and status of the nerve prior to surgery.

Week 1

- Elevate the hand above the heart when possible.
- Gently wiggle fingers several times a day.
- Dressings should be kept dry.

Approximately 5 days after surgery

- Remove bandages, you may get your hand wet at this point.
- Hand therapy may be implemented to improve stiffness and restore range of motion.

Weeks 2-4

- Gradually increase activity in the hand. Pain, soreness and swelling are expected to slowly decrease.
- Review with surgeon around week 3 following surgery.

4-8 Weeks and onwards

- You will likely regain full mobility of the fingers or will be working with a hand therapist to regain mobility.
- You may still experience soreness in your palm and sensitivity around the scar, but you should be able to participate fully in daily life, work and sporting activities.
- Scar pain and grip strength will continue to improve over the following months.

At a glance

Surgery Time - Approximately 30 minutes.

Time off work - 2-6 weeks. After 2 weeks gentle non-manual work may be able to be commenced.

Hospital Stay - Day case

Recovery - 6 weeks

