POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Carpal Tunnel Release

Post Operative

Dressing
- Keep dressing clean and dry.
- Do NOT remove dressing until follow up appointment.
- The dressing is keeping your hand splinted in an extended position to help with your recovery.

Showering
- You must keep your dressing clean and dry until seen in office.
- This means that you will have to sponge bathe until your follow up appointment.

Driving
- You may ride in a car immediately after surgery. If you are going to be in the car for long periods of time, we recommend getting out or the car at least 1 time an hour to walk around.
- You may drive the day after surgery, once the anesthesia has worn off.
- We recommend practicing in a parking lot to ensure you are able to control the vehicle.
- You are NOT allowed to drive while taking any pain medicine.

Activity
- Gentle active use of the hand is allowed after surgery.
- No pushing, pulling or lifting anything for at least 4 wks after surgery.
- Avoid repetitive activities for at least 4 wks. i.e. Writing, Typing
- Avoid gripping or power squeezing for at least 4 wks. i.e. Using garden tools, Lifting a suitcase
- Also avoid weight bearing on the operative extremity for at least 12 wks. If you use a cane or walker, you may use your operative extremity for balance only.
- Avoid activities that involve vibrations for at least 12 weeks. i.e. Operating machinery, mowing

Physical Therapy
- Immediately after surgery, there are no specific exercises for you to work on, as your wrist will still be in a splint.

Icing and Elevating
- We recommend icing and elevating as much as possible after surgery to help with pain and swelling. We recommend placing a layer between the ice and your skin, and icing for 20 minutes at a time, several times throughout the day. You should wait at least 20 minutes in between icing sessions and should NOT sleep with the ice bag on.

Medications
- Take your pain medication as directed. Pain medication can make you constipated, so make sure you are consuming plenty of water and fiber. If necessary, you can also try an over the counter stool softener. You may also take your pain medication with food to help prevent nausea.
Take your antibiotic as directed. It is important to complete the entire prescription.
Resume home medications as directed prior to surgery.

7-10 days Follow Up Appointment
During your first postoperative appointment it is likely that you will be seen by our Physician Assistant. The intent of this visit is to simply check your incision and go over some basic instructions. The physician will be available if there are any questions or concerns.

Dressing
During this appointment your dressing and stitches will be removed and steri strips will be applied to your skin. You may take the steri strips off after 1 week. Do not worry if they fall off sooner.
You may also be placed in an ace wrap with a gauze pads for a few days to protect your incision. You may remove this daily to shower, and reapply it until you feel comfortable to go without anything over your incision. Typically, this is for 2 or 3 days.

Showering
You may now shower, even with the steri strips on.
Gently wash the incision with soap and water. Do NOT scrub. Once you are out of the shower, pat the area dry and apply new dressing as directed above.
Do NOT submerge your incision (pools, baths or hot tubs) for at least 3 weeks after surgery. You should not submerge your incision until it is completely healed.
Do NOT use any powders or creams on your incision.

Activity
Continue to follow the restrictions outlined above.
You may start to gradually progress your activity level letting pain be your guide. It is usually about 1-2 weeks before patients are comfortable using the wrist for low demand activities such as desk work or working around the house (cooking, dishes, ironing, etc.). It is typically about 6-8 weeks before patients are able to comfortably return to heavy weight lifting or safely return to manual labor.
You may now participate in cardiovascular activities as tolerated. This includes biking and running. You may return to using the elliptical as long as you do not use your operative arm.

Physical Therapy
You may now start working on some gentle ROM exercises. This includes:

1. Wrist Flexion Stretch
   -Hold your operative arm out straight in front of you with your palm facing down.
   -Bend at the wrist so that your fingers are reaching toward your toes.
   -Gently grasp your operative fingers with the other hand and pull them back towards your body creating a gentle stretch.
   -Hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
   -Do this for 5 repetitions and repeat 3 times a day.
2. **Wrist Extension Stretch**
- Hold your operative arm out straight in front of you with your palm facing down.
- Extend at the wrist so that your fingers are reaching toward your face.
- Gently grasp your operative fingers with the other hand and pull them back towards your body creating a gentle stretch.
- Hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
- Do this for 5 repetitions and repeat 3 times a day.

3. **Wrist Supination Stretch**
- Hold your operative arm against your side with your elbow bent to 90 degrees and your palm facing down.
- Rotate at the wrist so that your palm faces up, making sure to keep your upper arm against your side.
- Gently grasp your operative fingers with the other hand and continue to rotate your wrist creating a gentle stretch.
- Hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
- Do this for 5 repetitions and repeat 3 times a day.

4. **Wrist Pronation Stretch**
- Hold your operative arm against your side with your elbow bent 90 degrees and your palm facing up.
- Rotate at the wrist so that your palm faces down, making sure to keep your upper arm against your side.
- Gently grasp your operative fingers with the other hand and continue to rotate your wrist creating a gentle stretch.
- Hold the stretch for 10 seconds.
- Do this for 5 repetitions and repeat 3 times a day.

Formal physical therapy generally is not necessary after this procedure. However, if necessary or desired, we are happy to write you for therapy during this appointment.

**4 Week Follow Up Appointment**
- Depending on how you are doing, we may ask to see you again for a follow up once you are 4 weeks out from surgery. If you are doing well with no pain or problems, you may call and cancel this appointment.

**Dressing**
- Once your incision is completely healed, you may start gentle scar massage with Vitamin E lotion to gently break up any scar tissue and help moisturize the skin which is prone to flaking in this area.

**Activity**
At this time we will remove most of your restrictions. You may now start pushing, pulling, lifting, gripping, squeezing and performing repetitive activities within reason.  
Start slowly and gradually increase your activity level letting pain be your guide.  
We still recommend avoiding weight bearing and vibrations for another 8 wks.

**Physical Therapy**

- Continue to work on your ROM exercises.  
- You may now start working on some gentle strengthening exercises. This includes:

1. **Wrist Flexion Strengthening**
   - Rest your operative arm on a table straight in front of you so that your forearm is supported and your wrist is hanging off the edge of the table with your palm facing up.  
   - Using a 1-2 pound weight (the equivalent of a small soup can) gently flex your wrist to 90 degrees and hold for 3 seconds.  
   - Relax slowly back down to neutral position or just beyond neutral in a slightly extended position.  
   - Do this for 5 repetitions and repeat 3 times a day.

2. **Wrist Extension Strengthening**
   - Rest your operative arm on a table straight in front of you so that your forearm is supported and your wrist is hanging off the edge of the table with your palm facing down.  
   - Using a 1-2 pound weight (the equivalent of a small soup can) gently extend your wrist to 90 degrees and hold for 3 seconds.  
   - Relax slowly back down to neutral position or just beyond neutral in a slightly flexed position.  
   - Do this for 5 repetitions and repeat 3 times a day.

3. **Grip Strength**
   - Gently squeeze a stress ball for a count of 3 seconds then relax your grip.  
   - Do this for 10 repetitions and repeat 3 times a day.

**12 Weeks After Surgery**

- By this time you should have completely recovered from your surgery.  
- Pillar pain (pain in the area of bottom part of your palm) is normal for up to 8-12 wks after surgery but should continue to improve.  
- Patients with numbness or tingling may start to notice an improvement immediately after surgery. These symptoms can continue to improve for up to 1 year after carpal tunnel surgery.

**Activity**

- You may now start weight bearing on your operative extremity.  
- You may also now participate in activities that involve vibrations.