Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: After the Operation

**Exercises**

a) **Finger movements**: Make sure you have full finger movements – from making a fist to straightening all your fingers fully, then make a fist again. Do this 10 times – every two hours or about six times a day.

b) **Other exercises**
   1. Bending the wrist.
   2. Touching the tip of each finger in turn with the thumb.

When not using the hand, in the first few days elevation may help to reduce swelling. The hand needs to be at shoulder height or above, for example, holding the opposite shoulder or using cushions. We do not routinely recommend a sling.

**Pain relief medication**

Take pain relief medication as needed. Over-the-counter pain relievers should be all you need. Take paracetamol and anti-inflammatories (if you can take them) such as ibuprofen.

**Use of your hand**

Your hand can be used straightaway for light tasks such as lifting a drink in a cup, dressing, writing or using a keyboard.

Most people will be able to resume driving within a week or two, but you have to be confident that you can do so **safely**; ensuring this is **your responsibility**.

**Bandages**

Bandages should be kept in place for two days. They can then be removed to allow more use of the hand, or kept in place if some padding is needed to help to protect against unexpected knocks, such as from children, animals or to help use walking aids.
The wound
This needs to be kept dry and covered until it has healed.

The adhesive dressing applied at the end of the operation is best left in place for a week but can be changed if necessary, for example, if an excess of blood has oozed onto it. Any blood can be wiped away with a small amount of mild antiseptic solution (such as Savlon) and the wound then dried and another adhesive dressing or plaster applied. Antiseptic solutions and plasters can be bought from chemists, supermarkets etc.

It usually takes up to two weeks for the skin to heal, although everyone is different. The wound and surrounding area are often a bit swollen and pink even after the skin has healed. You should seek advice if the wound or scar becomes increasingly painful, hot, swollen and/or red.

In the first instance, for further advice and queries contact the Hand Therapy team at the Ipswich Hospital on 01473 703312, Monday–Friday, 9 am–4.30 pm. Outside of these hours, please contact Martlesham Ward on 01473 702290 and staff will be able to advise you.

Sutures (stitches)
Advice about removal of sutures is given when you have your operation.

Suture removal advice: ........................................................................................................................................................................

Massage
After the wound has healed, the area of the scar in the palm and underneath it is often tender and sensitive. To help this you should massage the scar using a moisturising cream (such as E45). When you massage the scar, you need to press firmly (until the area goes white) and use circular movements. Massage the scar for five minutes at least three times a day.

It can take 3–6 months for the tenderness and sensitivity to settle down. This can be thought of as healing of the tissues and nerves under the skin. In general, no serious harm will be done by using the hand as normal, despite any tenderness – although it may hurt if you use it too vigorously.

Return to work
This will depend on your job. Most people will be able to return to work 2–6 weeks after their operation, depending on the activities their work involves. Use the above advice to determine what you can do.

Notes:

........................................................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................................................

Patient’s name: ................................................................. Hospital no: .................................................................

Date of operation: ............................................................. Consultant: .................................................................