

Carpal Tunnel Release

Carpal Tunnel Release is performed for:

1. Compression of the median nerve in the wrist, resulting in pain, weakness and numbness / tingling in the hand.

Rehabilitation Protocol for Carpal Tunnel Release

Some of the hand therapy terms may be unfamiliar to you now. They will become clear as you work with your hand therapist.

| Time after surgery | Hand Therapy/Support |
|--------------------|--|
| Day 1 to 2 weeks | <p>During the first two weeks you can expect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiate wound / oedema management with the hand therapist • commence early active range of motion movement for finger, thumb, wrist and forearm • perform passive range of motion exercises with hand therapist of the fingers and thumb with aim to achieve full passive range of motion by end of week 1 • commence tendon gliding exercises ensuring pain and symptoms are not aggravated • sutures will standardly be removed by the hand therapist between 10-14 days <p><i>Avoid heavy repetitive use / excessive wrist movement, and keep wound dry from sweat and external moisture</i></p> |
| 2 to 6 weeks | <p>During the next 4 weeks, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue wound / oedema management with hand therapist advice • commence scar management / desensitisation • commence median nerve gliding exercises once the wound has healed • progress exercise program with aim to maximise range of motion as soon as possible • commence gentle strengthening exercises if pain is minimal, including use of soft putty, foams or bands • gradually upgrade functional use <p><i>It is common to have pillar pain (pain through the palm of your hand with use) for up to 6-12 weeks post operation</i></p> |
| 6 to 12 weeks | <p>During the next 6 weeks, you can expect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hand therapist to evaluate grip and pinch strength • resume normal activities as tolerated • gradually increase strengthening, keeping progress pain free with easy and good quality movement |

Milestones for Carpal Tunnel Release

| Time after surgery | What you can expect |
|---------------------------|--|
| Week 6 | Full range of motion, flexion/extension, and rotation Pain free, return to driving and working |
| Week 12 | >90% strength and function in comparison to opposite flexion/rotation Noted improvement in preoperative numbness and tingling in hands Return to normal function |

Return to functional activities

| Activity | When you can expect to be able to do the activity |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Return to work | 2-4 weeks (light duties as tolerated) 4-10 weeks (heavier manual duties as tolerated) |
| Driving | 2-4 weeks as tolerated |
| Swimming | 2-3 weeks as tolerated and once the wound has healed |
| Lifting | Avoid lifting heavy items for 4-6 weeks post operation |
| Golf | 6 weeks |
| Return to usual functional ability | 6-12 weeks |