



OHIO PLASTIC SURGERY SPECIALISTS

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### **Post-Operative Instructions for Carpal Tunnel Surgery**

#### **Diet**

***If you had a Local Anesthetic:*** You have no diet restrictions.

***If you had Sedation:*** Start your diet with clear liquids or a light soup. Most people can resume a normal diet the day after surgery. Advance your diet as tolerated to your regular diet over the next 24 hours. You may experience some constipation as a result of the pain medication. Over the counter laxatives can be used such as Milk of Magnesia or a stool softener. If this is not sufficient, then dulcolax or a glycerin suppository may be necessary. These can be purchased over the counter at the pharmacy.

#### **Activity**

On the day of surgery and for 2 days after, please avoid exertion, straining, bending or lifting. I encourage you to be modestly active after the first few post-operative days. Walking is perfect. Avoid exercise until we discuss it at your first post op visit. Do not use the operated hand for exercise until we discuss this at the first post op visit.

You can use the operated hand somewhat for light tasks such as dressing and eating. Open and close the fingers and thumb 10 times each hour to keep the joints moving and help reduce swelling.

Do not apply pressure to the palm of your operated hand (activities like using a cane or walker). This may cause splitting of your suture line.

**Elevate the hand to help reduce swelling and pain.** The hand should be held at a level above your heart. When sleeping, prop the hand up on pillows.

#### **Wound Care**

Keep the bulky dressing on and dry for 2 days. If you shower, cover the hand with a plastic bag and a rubber band. After 2 days you may remove the dressing. At this point you will notice a suture line. After 2 days, and the removal of the dressing, you should begin to wash the hand at least twice daily with soap and water. Then apply bacitracin (or other antibacterial ointment) and a band-aid.

If you find that the original dressing is too tight, you may remove it and start the daily dressing changes. Some people find the ace wrap helps with working out the swelling/edema.

You may notice some numbness in the fingers after surgery that may last anywhere from several hours to days. This is quite normal and is from the local anesthesia we use in the operating room.

### **Bathing**

It is fine to bathe when you feel well. Keep the dressing intact and dry the first 2 days, after that you may get the wound wet. Avoid submersion of the wound in stagnant water and water of questionable cleanliness (hot tub, lakes, ponds, etc...) Running water from the sink or shower is always preferable to standing water.

### **Pain Control**

Take the narcotic pain medicine as needed. In one or two days you will probably be able to substitute Tylenol every 6-8 hours as needed. (**Do not** take the Tylenol with the Percocet, both have acetaminophen). Please do not drive until you are no longer taking the narcotic and are free of significant pain.

### **Emergencies**

If there is a problem, please call the office 614.682.5095. The answering machine will lead you to the on call surgeon's pager. Most issues are easily addressed and do not require significant intervention.

The most common emergencies that might need attention are:

- Sudden increase in pain
- Nausea that lasts 4 hours or more and does not respond to medication
- Bleeding that is profuse and uncontrolled
- High fever lasting more than a few hours and not responding to medication
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Leg swelling
- Loss of consciousness

If you feel the situation is urgent, call 911 and/or proceed directly to the closest emergency room. Please call us as well.

### **Follow-Up**

Follow-up is typically in about 12-14 days and should be scheduled by calling the office at 614.682.5095 if it has not already been arranged. Your sutures will be removed at this appointment.