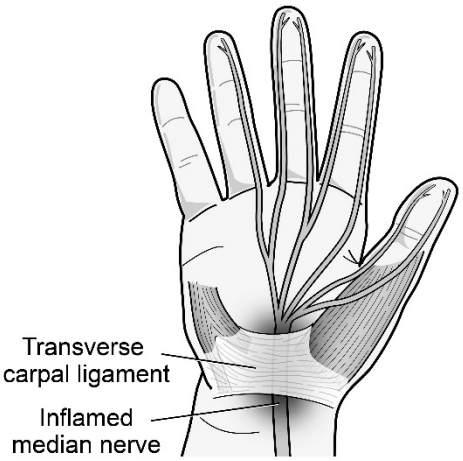
Home Care After Carpal Tunnel Release

This handout will go over the care you need to follow after carpal tunnel release. Talk to your provider if you have any questions.



Going Home
Rest and relax the first day. Getting enough sleep will help you recover. You will need to use your other hand more. Check your fingertips every 4-6 hours the first couple of days. They should feel warm and the color should be your normal skin color. After the first couple of days, look at your fingers twice a day. After the first couple of days resume your usual routines slowly.

Ask your doctor when you can return to work. This depends on the type of job you work.

Avoid smoking, tobacco products and secondhand smoke.

Finger Movement
Move your fingers regularly for the first 2 weeks after surgery. Working on finger range of motion will help reduce swelling and finger stiffness. This will not hurt the incision.

Activity

- **No** lifting, pushing, or pulling more than a few pounds (such as a cell phone) with your surgical hand until you are seen at your first post operative visit
- Light activity right after surgery is okay such as:
    - Buttoning clothes
    - Using zippers
    - Using utensils
    - Using your phone
    - Typing
    - Writing
    - Light cooking
- **No** driving while on narcotic pain medicine and until you can fully use your hand.

Dressing Care
You will have a bulky dressing or splint. **Do not** remove the dressing or splint unless directed to by your surgeon.

Cover the dressing or splint with a plastic bag and seal the edges with tape when you shower. **Do not** take a bath or submerge in water until the incision heals, or until your doctor tells you it is okay. If you accidentally get the dressing and/or splint wet, call your doctor.

Wear loose fitting clothes that are easy to get your bandage through.

Pain Control
Take any prescribed pain medicine as directed. Narcotics are not often prescribed for this procedure, typically over the counter pain medicine will work. You may take Tylenol up to 3000 mg in 24 hours or ibuprofen up to 2400 mg in 24 hours. If you

have trouble controlling pain, please contact the clinic directly to discuss.

Ice and Elevate
Use a cold pack on your wrist for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin. Keep your wrist raised on several pillows so your arm is above the level of your heart to reduce swelling.

Diet
Eat a light meal the first night you are home. Then, you may resume your normal eating habits. Drink two (8-ounce) glasses of fluid your first night home. **No** alcohol for 48 hours or until you stop taking pain medicine.

Follow-Up
You will return to clinic in 1-2 weeks for the first post operative visit. If appropriate your dressing and sutures will be removed at this time. This visit is to check how you are healing after surgery.

When to Call
Call the clinic if you notice:

- Swelling or numbness that does not get better when you raise your hand and move your fingers
- Bleeding
- Cool fingertips
- A color change in your hand or fingers (Please note bruising can occur for some people after this procedure)
- Your splint is too tight, too loose, broken, or wet
- Signs of infection in the incision:
    - Warmth
    - Redness
    - Cloudy, pus-like drainage
    - Fever over 100.5º F or 38.1° C for two reading taken 4 hours apart

Who to Call
If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4568