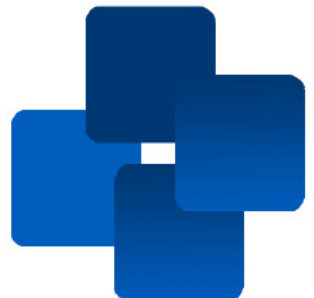


# Carpal Tunnel Decompression

## Department of Plastic Surgery



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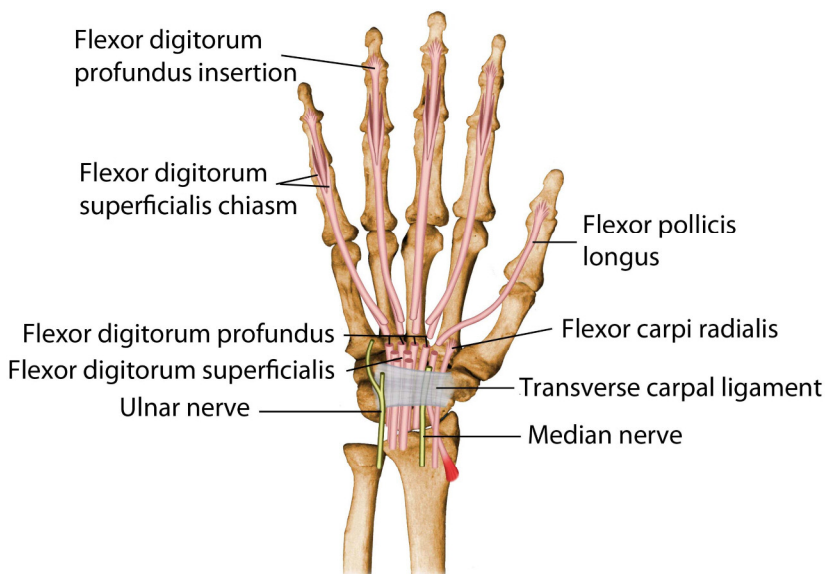


# Carpal Tunnel Decompression

The purpose of this leaflet is to explain the procedure of carpal tunnel decompression and to give you post-operative advice.

## What is carpal tunnel decompression?

This is an operation for the treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome. The operation involves cutting the transverse carpal ligament which will relieve pressure on the median nerve at the wrist.



## Before your operation

A small number of people may require a general anaesthetic so please follow the pre-operative advice given to you by the pre-operative assessment nurse.

You may eat and drink as normal before your operation but it is advisable to eat only a light meal. If you are having a general anaesthetic you will receive specific instructions.

If you are a smoker, please stop smoking as soon as you can before your operation. Smoking affects the blood circulation to your fingers and may lead to poor post-operative healing and reduced chances of complete success of the surgery overall.

On arrival to the ward / unit you will be admitted by a nurse and an anaesthetist will see you. You will be in the operating theatre for 30 minutes but the operation itself will take less than 20 minutes.

Please ensure that you remove any nail polish, gels or acrylic nails and any rings.

### **What will the scar be like?**

The scar will be approximately 4 cm long and is situated on the palm just beyond the wrist creases.

### **After the operation**

- You will have a bulky dressing which usually stays on until the removal of the stitches at about 10 to 14 days (you may arrange removal of your stitches with your practice nurse)
- You may experience slight discomfort or occasional pain, but by the time that the stitches are removed the hand is usually comfortable enough for light use e.g. dusting
- You maybe go home with a sling, although only in certain cases due to the possible shoulder stiffness a sling can cause
- You will be sent an appointment to attend the outpatients department three months after your operation

### **Post-operative advice**

- Keep the dressings clean and dry
- It is advisable to put a large plastic bag over your dressings when bathing or showering
- If a sling has been given to you, it is important to keep your hand up for 48 hours. Please wear the sling during the day and rest your arm on pillows at night, continue to keep your hand raised above heart level as much as possible to reduce swelling
- Perform regular finger exercises such as bending and straightening as this prevents stiffness
- If your hand becomes cold and blue please loosen your dressings
- If you have been given painkillers, please be aware that you may experience constipation so please eat plenty of fruit and vegetables to prevent this

## **Risks of operation**

- Surgical site infection
- In rare cases, the operation may need to be repeated if symptoms do not improve completely or if symptoms return
- You will have a scar which may take time to heal
- You may have pain or numbness in the palm of your hand
- Weakness of the grip

## **Benefits of operation**

- The tingling you experienced before the operation should disappear
- You will no longer have to wear a splint at night

**Images © Department of Clinical Photography & Illustration**

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