

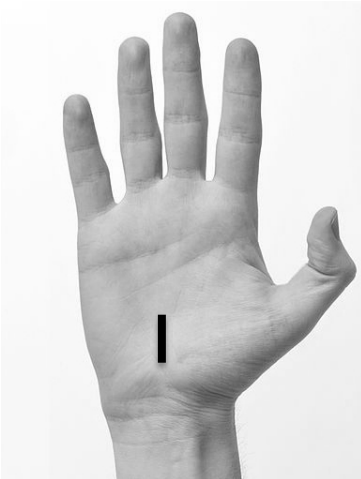


After Your Open Carpal Tunnel Release

Self-care and follow-up

Dressing and Wound Care

- After surgery, you will be in a **bulky dressing with a splint** that supports your wrist. The splint helps protect the incision site and lessens swelling.
- When showering or bathing, cover the splint and your hand with a plastic bag to keep everything dry.
- Elevate your hand above your heart as much as possible to lessen swelling and pain. Pillows and blankets under the arm are helpful when you go to sleep.
- **4-5 days after surgery, you will see a Hand Therapist to have the splint removed and work on range of motion and scar massage.**
- After the splint comes off, you may shower without covering the incision, but do not soak your hand in the bathtub, swimming pool, or sink.



If your incision is red, foul-smelling, or there is drainage coming from it during daytime hours, call us right away at (206) 598-4263 (HAND). After office hours, you can call the hospital operator at (206) 598-6190 and ask for the Hand Fellow on-call. Go to the emergency room or urgent care if this happens at night or on the weekend.

Surgical incision shown on the left (2-3 cm in length)

Pain Management

- You will receive a prescription for narcotic pain medicine. Take the medicine only if you need it. If your pain is mild, you may take Tylenol (acetaminophen) instead.
- Be sure to talk with the clinic nurse about how to take your pain medication. Taking the correct dose at the right time is very important.
- If you have uncomfortable side effects from the pain medicine, please call the nurse at (206) 598-4263 (HAND).

Driving

- Do not drive if you are taking narcotic pain medication. It is not safe. The medicine can make you sleepy and delay your reaction
- Once you are no longer taking the medicine, you may drive as soon as you can comfortably grip the steering wheel with both hands.

Activity

- You can use your hand for activities of daily living, such as eating, writing, typing, getting dressed, brushing teeth, combing your hair, preparing food, and other light activities.
- Do not lift anything heavier than a cup of coffee or full soda can (about 1-2 lbs) until sutures have been removed.
- Avoid heavy repetitive activities for the first 4 weeks such as hammering or weight lifting as these may increase scarring and may lead to prolonged recovery.
- You may do light aerobic exercises 2-3 days after surgery.

Follow-Up Plan

- When you leave the surgery center, you should have a **follow-up** already set up with an occupational **hand therapist 4-5 days after surgery**
- You will see the occupational therapist and your surgeon at your 2-week visit after surgery. Your sutures will be removed at this visit.
- The Hand Therapist will assess your progress. The Therapist will also teach you exercises to lessen the scarring around the incision and increase your hand's strength and range of motion
- Once your sutures are removed, you can increase activities as tolerated but avoid heavy repetitive activities for 4 weeks after surgery.

Results

- Most patients who have carpal tunnel release regain full use of their hand, with full motion and return of strength within about 4 weeks after their surgery. Some pain or numbness may persist even with surgery.

For more information, please visit our website at WWW.UWHAND.COM