

## CARPAL TUNNEL RELEASE

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is caused by compression of the Median Nerve at the wrist. The compression can be caused by injury, rheumatoid arthritis, a fracture or by a long term thickening of the outer layer of the tendons. An operation is performed to simply release a ligament in the hand to decompress the pinched nerve.

### **Anaesthetic**

In most cases, a general anaesthetic will be given or after discussion with your Surgeon and / or Anaesthetist, you may receive a local anaesthetic with sedation or regional block. This means you will be awake during the procedure, but may have some light sedation to aid in relaxation.

Local Anaesthetic will be injected into the wound to aid in pain relief post-operatively. The Anaesthetist will usually meet you at the Surgicentre or make arrangements to see you in his / her consulting rooms, one to two days prior to the operation. The Anaesthetist will discuss any queries that you may have regarding which anaesthetic is best for you.

### **The Operating Theatre**

Once in theatre, the Anaesthetist and / or Anaesthetic Assistant will apply various monitors to you, this is for the Anaesthetist to assess your vital signs whilst you are having your operation. An anaesthetic drug will be given to relax or put you to sleep. Oxygen will be administered through a light mask. A tourniquet will be applied to your upper arm. For routine procedures, the operation takes approximately 30 minutes. A small incision is made and is closed with sutures.

### **AFTER SURGERY**

#### **Recovery**

On awakening, there will be a compression dressing covering your hand. A plaster splint may be used to support your hand and wrist.

Local anaesthetic is injected into the wound whilst in theatre, so you should be pain free. It may feel strange/numb at first. If a regional block is used the arm will be numb for several hours.

After returning to Recovery from Theatre, your condition will be closely monitored until your observations are within normal limits. The sedation of the anaesthetic needs to wear off before going home.

After a local anaesthetic, you may need to stay an hour to have some light refreshments and finalise any paperwork.

**IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF HOME  
ARRANGE FOR A RESPONSIBLE ADULT TO DRIVE YOU HOME**



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Prior to leaving the Surgicentre, you will be given a list of instructions for the first week or until you see your Surgeon again. A sling will be applied to support and elevate the hand.

### Home

- The local anaesthetic starts to wear off within 4-6 hours. A regional block takes up to 12 hours to wear off.
- It is important that you rest and elevate your hand either in a sling or on a pillow for at least 48 hours. This is to assist in the reduction of swelling and aid in pain relief and healing.
- The sling may be removed at night.
- It is best to take pain-relieving medications when you start to feel pain, do not wait until the wound is throbbing. Take the analgesia regularly. You may require analgesia for at least 48 hours or longer.
- Keep the bandage or plaster splint **clean** and **dry** until your follow-up appointment with your Surgeon.
- Observe the fingers for colour, warmth, movement and feeling.
- Commence gentle exercises by making a fist with the unaffected fingers and releasing it several times an hour.
- You may require assistance with activities such as driving and home duties.
- Do not drive a car until you regain full movement of your hand and fingers (approximately 1 week).
- If you have any problems contact your Surgeon or General Practitioner or your nearest Emergency Department.

### Returning to Work

Your Surgeon will advise you when you can return to work.

- If your work involves heavy labour, this may be up to 3 or 4 weeks.
- If your work involves minimal use of your hand, up to 2 weeks.