

Expectations for Endoscopic Carpal Tunnel Surgery



Dr. Andrew M. I. Bogle

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by pressure on the median nerve as it passes through the carpal tunnel in your wrist. Symptoms of carpal tunnel include numbness, pain, weakness, lack of dexterity and/or cramping. Surgery to correct this problem releases the pressure on the nerve as it passes through the canal. This is done via a small incision near the wrist. Then an endoscope, which is a small camera, is used to see inside the carpal tunnel. The transverse carpal ligament, which is the roof and ceiling of the carpal tunnel, is then divided to release pressure on the nerve.

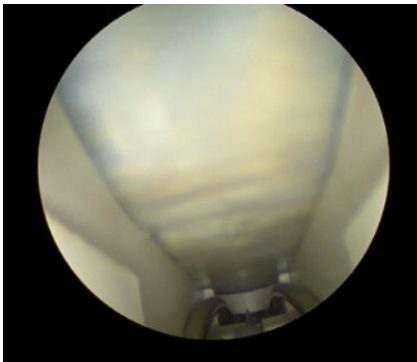
Please refer to www.handcare.org for more information about the etiology and symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome.

What to expect on the day of surgery

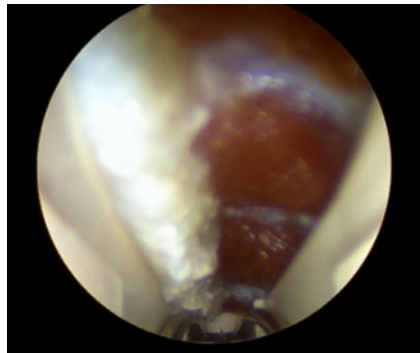
This procedure is done on an outpatient basis, so you will go home the same day.

The surgery is typically done under regional anesthesia and light sedation. This means that your arm is numbed by the anesthesiologist using a technique called a brachial plexus block. This will numb and relax the muscles of your arm from the shoulder down for several hours. You will also have sedation, which means you will sleep through the procedure. You will be breathing on your own, as intubation (inserting a tube into the throat) is not typically required for this surgery. You will not feel any pain during surgery, and it would be unusual for you to remember anything during surgery.

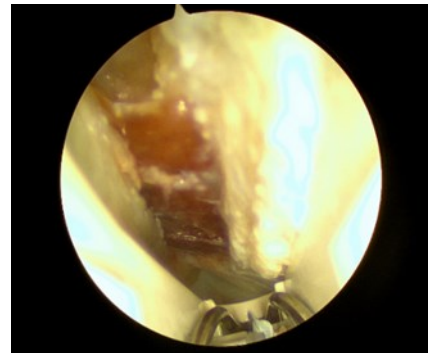
The surgery usually takes approximately ten minutes in the operating room. You will be in a soft bandage after surgery. Your arm will remain numb for several hours after the surgery, and you will need a sling for this time, but once the block wears off, a sling is not required or encouraged. Although the surgery itself only takes a few minutes, patients spend several hours at the surgery center/hospital for surgical preparation and post-operative recovery time .



Intraoperative photo of an endoscopic carpal tunnel surgery prior to dividing the transverse carpal ligament.



Intraoperative photos of an endoscopic carpal tunnel surgery after dividing the transverse carpal. Note that the pressure within the canal causes the two sides of the divided ligament to separate.



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What to expect after surgery

DRESSING AND WOUND CARE

- **First 3 days after surgery:** You will have a soft dressing on your hand. You may shower/bathe as long as the dressing remains dry.
- **After 3 days:** You may remove your dressing and shower normally with the incision uncovered. You should not scrub the incision. The incision may be left uncovered, or you may cover it with a Band-Aid or gauze. Please avoid submerging your hand in a pool or hot tub/jacuzzi until you return for your follow-up. If you wash dishes, please use rubber gloves while doing so.

SUTURES

The stitches will dissolve on their own. The incision is covered with a skin glue that has a purplish color. This will fall off on its own.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

Avoid lifting anything heavier than 2 pounds until you return to the office for follow-up.

Symptom relief

- **If you had painful numbness and tingling throughout the day and pain at night, these symptoms often improve quickly after surgery.**
- **If you had numbness without pain, improvement in the numbness may take longer. Sometimes, if the nerve was very compressed, the numbness might not fully go away. It can take up to 18 months from the time of surgery to reach maximum improvement.**

It is normal to experience weakness in your grip for 6 to 8 weeks after surgery.

It is normal to have swelling in your hand and wrist after surgery.

Pain in the heel of your hand when bearing weight or gripping (also called pillar pain) may last for 3 to 4 months after surgery but it will resolve on its own.

Most patients do not require physical therapy after surgery.

If you have any questions, the most efficient way to contact us is via the messaging portal on MyChart. Dr. Bogle's team works on checking and answering these messages throughout the workday to get back with you as quickly as possible. **After hours and on weekends** (outside of 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday-Friday) please call 804-379-2414 to speak with the on-call provider.



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