What to Expect Post Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery

Jenny King November 20, 2018

The Center shares some tips on what to expect in the coming weeks once you've had carpal tunnel release surgery.

(Newswire.net -- November 20, 2018) Bend, Oregon -- If you are preparing to undergo carpal tunnel release surgery, you may be wondering what to expect in the coming weeks and in the months post-surgery. The outcomes of open surgery and endoscopic surgery are similar, and for patients who are eligible to utilize wide-awake local anesthesia rather than general anesthesia, recovery times and potential risks decrease. Wide-awake local anesthesia is surgery performed with only local anesthesia, allowing the patient to avoid grogginess, and even drive him or herself home after surgery, if necessary.

After your surgery, you may be encouraged to do the following:

1) Elevate your hand above your heart and move your fingers to reduce swelling and prevent stiffness.
2) Ice the surgical site for a given amount of time, a few times a day.
3) You may need to wear a splint or wrist brace for several weeks.
4) Follow your doctor’s specific instructions on when it’s okay to return to work and whether you will have any restrictions on your work activities.
5) If you experience increased pain and weakness for more than two months following surgery, you may be referred to a hand therapist to help improve your recovery.

Recovery can look different depending on who you are and in what condition your median nerve is in before surgery. Age, health factors, and your ability to follow post-surgical care guidelines can all affect recovery times. “It's important to massage the palm in the horseshoe area of the hand, to minimize scaring, decrease pain, and help desensitize the area,” says Dr. James Verheyden, orthopedic surgeon at The Center.

It is likely that surgery will improve your previous symptoms, but recovery can be gradual, and in some cases, can take up to one full year. Other factors that can contribute to longer recovery times are preexisting conditions, such as arthritis or tendonitis, which could also be contributing to pain and stiffness. “Most patients note dramatic and immediate improvements in their symptoms, but it frequently takes about three months after surgery before their grip strength returns. Patience may have difficulty opening doors and jars of food up to three months after surgery,” says Dr. Verheyden.

Recovery milestones you can expect to meet with carpal tunnel release vary depending on the factors stated above, but this is one example of how your recovery could progress.

- **Around 1 week after surgery**: Removal of bandages and stitches will take place. Physical therapy may be suggested to improve stiffness and restore range of motion.
- **Weeks 2 - 4**: You may gradually resume activity in the affected hand. Pain and soreness in the palm are expected to slowly decrease.
- **4 weeks**: You will likely regain full mobility of the digits or will be working with a therapist to regain mobility.
- **6 - 8 weeks**: You may still experience soreness in your palm and sensitivity to deep pressure or touch, but you should be able to participate fully in daily life and sporting activities.
- **1 year**: Grip and hand strength usually come back within 2-3 months after surgery, but it can take up to a year to fully recover. By one year, you should be receiving all the benefits of your surgery.
The good news is that this condition is very treatable. It is important to be evaluated by your orthopedic surgeon in the early stages to slow or even stop the progression of carpal tunnel syndrome. The sooner you start treatment, the better your chances of a preventing long-term damage to your median nerve and recovering fully.

About The Center

The Center Orthopedic & Neurosurgical Care & Research is a multispecialty practice with 19 physicians fellowship trained in orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, and physical medicine and rehabilitation, and 21 mid-level providers. Serving the region for over 50 years, The Center physicians have shared a commitment to the community with a focus on personal care for patients all over Central Oregon. A strong dedication to research has allowed the physicians at The Center to help develop new technologies and techniques, offering Central Oregon residents medical options unavailable in other areas of the country. To learn more visit www.thecenteroregon.com.

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