

Open Carpal Tunnel Release

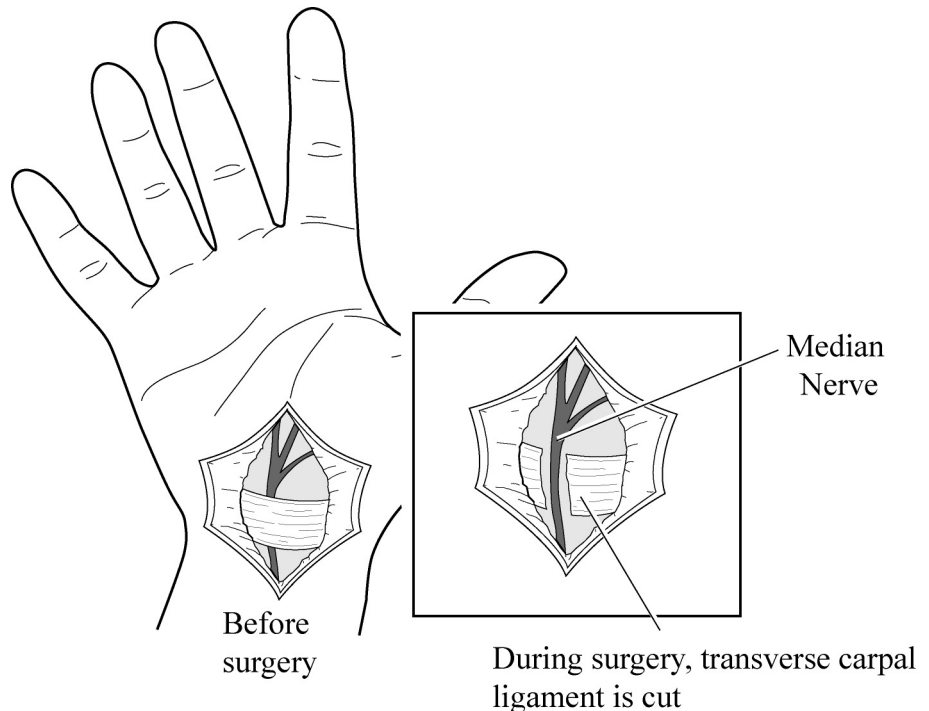


THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Surgery to relieve carpal tunnel is often done as an outpatient procedure. Your surgery will be done through an open incision on your palm called an open approach or open release.

During surgery, the doctor will cut the ligament that crosses over the carpal tunnel to lessen the pressure on the median nerve. The ligament is called the transverse carpal ligament.

After surgery, you will have limited use of your hand, so you need to have an adult available to help you for at least the first few days.



Incision care

- Your incision will be closed with stitches. You will have an ace wrap and bandage on your hand that will need to stay on for 2 to 3 days after your surgery. Your doctor will tell you when you can remove the bandage.
- You need to keep the bandage clean and dry. If you want to shower, cover the bandage with a plastic bag and secure it with tape to keep the bandage dry.
- When the bandage is removed, you may wash your hand incision gently with soap and water. Gently pat the incision dry with a clean towel. You can leave the incision uncovered or place a Band-Aid on the site.
- Your stitches will be removed 8 to 14 days after your surgery.
- Do not soak your hand in water until your incision is well healed. This means you need to stay out of hot tubs, bathtubs or other pools of water until then.

Activity and other care

- Elevate your hand above the level of your heart after surgery. This will help to keep the swelling out of your fingers and lessen pain.
- You should begin finger bending (flexion) and straightening (extension) exercises right after surgery. Do these exercises for several minutes and repeat them several times each day. Your goal is to make a full fist and to fully open your fingers.
- Use your hand to do daily activities. Avoid heavy lifting or strenuous activities. Avoid activities that cause hand pain. Let pain be your guide. It may take up to 3 months for the tenderness in your palm to resolve.
- You will be given a prescription for a narcotic pain medicine. Many patients find that over the counter anti-inflammatory medicines like Aleve, Advil, Motrin, or Tylenol are enough to control any discomfort.
- A referral to a hand therapist will only be needed if you do not achieve your full range of motion. Your range of motion will be checked at your first follow-up visit.
- After your stitches are removed, begin scar tissue massage to your incision site. Take a few minutes several times a day and massage your incision.

Problems to report to your doctor or nurse

- Increased pain in your hand not relieved with pain medicine
- Signs of infection at your incision that may include:
 - Skin is red or warm to touch at the site
 - Drainage or odor at the site
 - Swelling at the site
 - Chills or fever over 100.5 degrees F or 38 degrees C

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.