

Carpal Tunnel/ Ulnar Transposition Discharge Instructions

Although post-operative recovery is somewhat different for everyone, here are some helpful guidelines for the first few weeks after your surgery.

For symptoms that seem life-threatening, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Please call 303-403-6628 for:

- A temperature of 101 degrees or higher
- Chills with shivering
- Inability to keep down food or fluids
- Color change in your hand or fingers

- Increasing redness, swelling, or drainage of blood or fluid from the incision site
- Weakness, numbness, or tingling of your arm or hand

Please understand that if you call outside of normal office hours for these issues, you will be sent to the ER or told to follow-up on the next business day.

Do NOT call our office after hours for pain medications or muscle relaxants. We cannot call this in to your pharmacy. If you need new or a refill of medications, you will need to come to our office during business hours or go to the ER.

Post-operative instructions:

- **Ride home:** You must arrange a ride home from the hospital with a responsible adult. You are not allowed to drive yourself and we will not let you go home by taxi. Expect to be discharged a few hours after the surgery.
- **Pain control:** You will be given a prescription for pain medications upon discharge from the hospital. Make certain that you take your medications with food. Do not take ibuprofen or aspirin until two weeks after surgery. Please note that many prescription pain medications (such as Norco, Percocet, or Vicodin) contain acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not take extra Tylenol while you are taking these medications. When you feel that you no longer need your prescription pain medications, you may take Tylenol as directed for any continued pain. We can give you a prescription, but are unable to give you actual pain pills to take home after surgery. You will need to stop by a pharmacy on your way home from the hospital to fill the prescription. Do not place ice or heat packs on the incision. You may elevate your arm above your head periodically to avoid your hand from swelling and to relieve pain.

If you experienced numbness, pain or weakness before surgery, it may take a few weeks or even months for these symptoms to improve. It is possible they may not improve. Please notify us if these symptoms worsen.

- **Incision care:** You will have an incision on your hand (carpal tunnel) or arm (ulnar nerve) with sutures (stitches), skin glue or adhesive strips. There will be 3 layers of bandages that cover your incision. You will be discharged with an ACE bandage around your incision. You should remove the ACE bandage the day after surgery. If you notice a change in the color of your hand or your hand/fingers feel like they are “falling asleep”, remove the ACE bandage earlier. Underneath the ACE bandage will be gauze bandage rolled around your arm or hand. You may remove this on the 2nd day following your surgery. Lastly, there will be a taped bandage directly over the incision. Do not remove this dressing as this will be removed at your next post-operative clinic visit 10 to 14 days after surgery. **Avoid touching your incision as much as possible. Do not put any medications or other skin products/ lotions on your incision unless instructed to do so.** You may have a splint after surgery, which should not be removed unless instructed to do so. You may begin to take a shower 3 days after surgery but the bandages or incision cannot get wet. You must place a plastic bag around your hand or arm to make sure the dressing does not get wet. Do not submerge your incision in water (swimming, baths, etc.) for four weeks after surgery.
- **Lifting:** You should avoid lifting anything with the affected arm or hand for 2-3 weeks after surgery.

- **Activity:** It is important to open and close your fingers 10 times per hour. This will help avoid swelling of your hand and maintain flexibility. If you had ulnar nerve surgery, avoid bending your elbow for 3 weeks after surgery. Avoid rigorous activity for 4 weeks after surgery. You may use your hand and arm to eat and for personal care. At 4 weeks after surgery, you may begin to slowly return to your regular routine.
- **Work:** You may return to work 2 weeks after surgery if you can avoid rigorous use. You may be restricted to phone/desk duty and to avoid using the affected arm/hand. Please do not return to work until you see us in clinic.
- **Driving:** You may drive 2-3 weeks after surgery if you feel strong enough to grip the steering wheel. Do not plan on driving before your first post-operative appointment 2 weeks after surgery.

Blood thinners:

If you were on blood thinners such as Aspirin (325mg), Heparin, Lovenox, Coumadin, Pradaxa, Eliquis, Xarelto or Plavix, you will need to contact your primary care provider for when to resume these medications. Commonly you will need to wait 2 weeks after surgery. You may take your baby Aspirin (81mg) immediately after surgery.

We are dedicated to making you feel better as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any of your questions.