

# Post-Operative Instructions: Carpal Tunnel Decompression Occupational Hand Therapy

You have been provided this sheet as you have just had a carpal tunnel decompression surgery. We hope that this provides you with the information you need before you next see a professional.

## On Discharge Home:

### Wound

- Initially after your surgery you will have a bulky dressing on your hand as well as a primary dressing to the wound. It is important that you keep this dry.
- You may be advised to remove the bulky dressing yourself after 48 hours. If so, please leave the primary dressing in situ.
- It is expected that you will have your primary dressing changed at your GP surgery or you would be booked in for a clinic review. If in doubt book an appointment with your GP practice nurse.

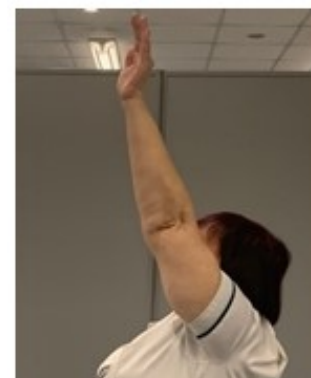
### Swelling

- You may have been provided with a sling to elevate your hand. You should try not to wear it all the time. Elevation above heart level is important to help alleviate any swelling to the hand, this can be achieved by resting your hand on your opposite shoulder when walking or on pillows when relaxing or sleeping. Keeping your hand always in a sling prevents movement and can sometimes lead to further stiffness and pain.

### Exercises



1) Bend your elbow, hold 5-10 seconds. Then straighten your elbow and hold for 5-10 seconds.





2) Hook the tips of your fingers to touch the top part of your palm. Hold for 5-10 seconds.



3) Make a tight fist with all your fingers tucked into your palm. Hold for 5-10 seconds.



4) Start by touching the thumb to the base of the index finger; slide the thumb up to the tip of the index then across each fingertip to the little finger. Then run your thumb down the little finger and onto the palm as far as you can. Make sure the tip of the thumb is bending.



5) Spread your fingers out into a fan shape, hold for 5-10 seconds then bring them back together.

- It is **important** to move your hand regularly even if it is uncomfortable, this is normal.
- Try to do the above exercises regularly throughout the day i.e., **every 2-3 hours** or 4 times during the day.

## **10-14 Days after Surgery:**

### **Wound**

- At this stage the wound should be healed, and your sutures should have been removed / dissolved.
- The wound will now be a scar and may be quite tender or sensitive, this is normal.
- It is advised to overcome this by starting to massage your scar in a firm circular movement using non-perfumed hand cream. You should do these 5-10 minutes at a time 3-4 times a day.

### **Swelling**

- If you feel your hand is still swollen, continue to elevate it as able and actively move it. Try practise making a fist with your hand in elevation.
- Gentle downward massage can also help swelling by moving it away from your hand. Complete this 5-10 minute at a time. Always stroke down towards your elbow not up towards your hand.

### **Movement**

- We hope that if you have been doing the above-mentioned exercises and that you are able to make a full fist.
- You may notice that your hand still feels weak. Practise squeezing a soft sponge or soft stress ball; avoid squeezing anything too hard as this may cause pain.
- It is okay to be using your hand for light activities and gradually increasing to heavier activities as able / comfortable.

## **After two weeks**

Please seek a referral to our department if you are unable to make a full fist at this stage and / or have persistent swelling and pain.

We are unable to see you for an appointment without a referral from your GP or Consultant.

Kind Regards,

Hand Therapy Team  
Ashford Hospital

**Please note**, although the Occupational Therapy Department are the authors of this information leaflet, we do not take responsibility for any complications that may occur, as we are not the prescriber. The healthcare professional that has provided this to you has done so because in their professional opinion you will benefit from it and take responsibility in doing so.

Name of Provider: .....

Profession: .....

Date: .....

## Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email [asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net). If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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**We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.**



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