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## **Carpal and Cubital Tunnel Release Postoperative Instructions**

### General

A family member or caregiver may need to assist you for the next few weeks.

- Helps with basic movement and function
- Helps with household chores
- Helps ensure all medications are administered
- Helps provide emotional support for daily life and rehabilitation

Furniture may need to be rearranged to avoid tripping and falling.

In general, the more you are up and ambulating, the better you will do.

You may ice once every hour for up to 20 minutes, as needed, in the first few postoperative days.

### Activity

No heavy lifting with the operative arm. OK for elbow range of motion.

#### **Do:**

- Perform active shoulder, elbow, wrist, and finger motion exercises several times per day to reduce swelling in the fingers.
- Elevate the operative extremity to reduce swelling.
- Follow your physical therapist's instructions.
- You may return to work with minimal use of the operative arm (ie desk work)

#### **Do Not:**

- Lift anything heavy with the operative arm

### Wound Care

Unless otherwise noted, your surgical site was closed with absorbable sutures under the skin. Steri-strips were placed over top. A large, sterile soft dressing was placed in the operating room.

- On day 3, remove the ACE wrap and gauze. Leave the steri-strips in place. They will fall off on their own. Redress with large band-aids daily.

Some drainage is normal for the first few days postoperatively.

- Excessive drainage that does not slow down after a few days is worrisome. Please call the office with any questions or concerns.

Some redness around the incision is also normal in the first week postoperatively.

- If the wound becomes progressively more red, swollen, or painful after several days, please call the office.

### Medications

Unless otherwise noted, you will be given prescriptions for the following medications:

Aspirin 81 mg daily (2 weeks total)

- Helps prevent blood clots postoperatively

Hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Norco or Lortab) 5/325 mg every 6 hours as needed

- Most patients do not need strong pain medication after carpal tunnel release



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- Dr. Baessler recommends over the counter ibuprofen and acetaminophen instead of Norco/Lortab
- Strong pain medication that can cause addiction
- Indiana law only allows prescription of 1 weeks' worth of narcotics
- Only use Lortab or Norco as a last resort
- May cause nausea, constipation, drowsiness, altered mentation

#### Showering

You may shower on postoperative day 3

- Remove dressing. Leave the steri-strips in place.
- Let water run over the incision. Do not vigorously scrub. Pat dry. Redress with band-aids.

Do NOT soak or submerge under water (bath tub, hot tub, pool).

- Until wound is completely healed (usually around 6 weeks)

#### Driving

You may return to driving if:

- You are completely off narcotic pain medications
- Strength and reflexes are back to normal

#### Follow-up

Dr. Baessler will see you back in the office 2 weeks postoperatively for a wound check.