

## OS05lite Carpal Tunnel Release (under Local Anaesthetic)

This document will give you information about carpal tunnel release. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

### What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition where there is increased pressure on the nerve that crosses the front of your wrist (the median nerve).

The median nerve runs through a tight tunnel, together with the tendons that bend your fingers.

### What are the benefits of surgery?

The main benefit of surgery is to relieve pain and numbness in your hand.

### Are there any alternatives to surgery?

If your symptoms are mild, a wrist support worn at night often helps.

A steroid injection near the carpal tunnel can reduce the numbness or pain in most people, but the symptoms usually come back.

### What does the operation involve?

A carpal tunnel release can usually be performed under local anaesthetic and usually takes about a quarter of an hour. Your surgeon will make a small cut in the palm of your hand. They will then cut the tight ligament (called the flexor retinaculum) that forms the roof of the carpal tunnel (see figure 1). This stops the nerve being compressed.

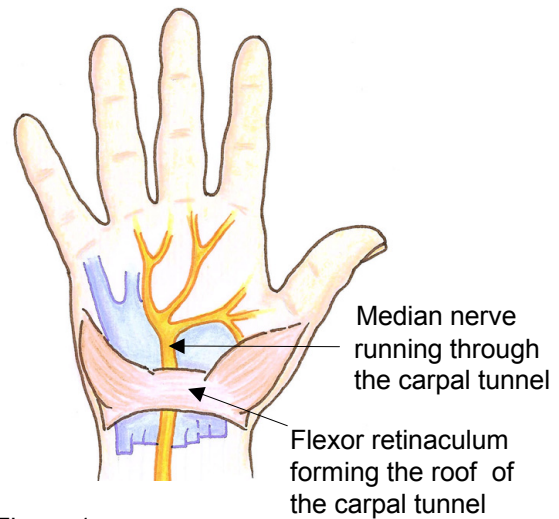


Figure 1

Median nerve running under the flexor retinaculum

### What complications can happen?

#### 1 General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Scarring

#### 2 Specific complications of this operation

- Continued numbness in your thumb, index and middle fingers
- Tenderness of the scar
- Aching in the wrist
- Return of numbness and pain
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of the hand (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome)

## How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day. You should keep your hand lifted up and bandaged for the first couple of days. It is important to gently exercise your fingers, elbow and shoulder to prevent stiffness.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Your symptoms may continue to improve for up to six months, or even longer if the carpal tunnel syndrome was related to work.

## Summary

Carpal tunnel syndrome causes numbness in your thumb, index and middle fingers. A carpal tunnel release should improve your symptoms and prevent permanent nerve damage.

## Further information

- NHS smoking helpline on 0800 022 4332 and at [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk)
- [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk) – for advice on maintaining a healthy weight
- [www.eidoactive.co.uk](http://www.eidoactive.co.uk) – for information on how exercise can help you
- [www.aboutmyhealth.org](http://www.aboutmyhealth.org) – for support and information you can trust
- Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland at [www.aagbi.org](http://www.aagbi.org)
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons at [www.aaos.org](http://www.aaos.org)
- Arthritis Research Campaign on 0870 850 500 and at [www.arc.org.uk](http://www.arc.org.uk)
- Royal College of Anaesthetists at [www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)
- Royal College of Anaesthetists and Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland [www.youranaesthetic.info](http://www.youranaesthetic.info)
- Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association at [www.rsds.org](http://www.rsds.org)
- Internet Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma at [www.orthogate.org](http://www.orthogate.org)
- [www.surgeryencyclopedia.com](http://www.surgeryencyclopedia.com)
- [www.eatonhand.com](http://www.eatonhand.com)

- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 – textphone)

## Acknowledgements

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