

## CARPAL TUNNEL SURGERY

### **Surgery**

The surgical procedure is performed in an operating room at a hospital or an outpatient surgery center. An anesthesiologist or a nurse anesthetist will provide your anesthesia. The anesthesia will be either intravenous sedation with local anesthetic in the hand or a Bier block regional anesthetic in which a local anesthetic is injected into your venous system of the affected extremity with a tourniquet inflated.

### **Recovery Room**

The procedure takes approximately 30-45 minutes in the operating room. You will be observed for a brief period after the surgery in a recovery room setting. You may not drive yourself home. An ace wrap will hold the dressing in place. A narcotic pain reliever (Tylenol #3, Darvocet N-100 or Vicodin) is prescribed to help decrease the post-operative pain for the next 2-3 days. Take this medication **only** as needed.

### **Post Operative**

Approximately 48 hrs after surgery a hand therapist will remove your dressing. There will be some dried blood on the incision and some bruising around the wrist. You may cleanse the wound with a mild soapy solution and may get the wound wet in the shower. A small, light bandage will help protect the wound for the next few days. You may wear a splint on the wrist to help protect the hand. Exercises for the hand to improve motion and to control swelling will be given to you. Do not lift more than 5 lbs with this hand.

### **Two weeks after surgery**

The stitches will be removed at about 8-14 days after surgery. This will also be done by the hand therapist. Once the stitches are removed, steri-strips will be applied. These strips usually stay on until they fall off on their own.

### **Exercises the first week**

Finger motion is encouraged by fully extending and flexing the digits. Exercise individual digits to obtain flexor tendon gliding by holding three fingers out straight and then flex the other into the palm. This should be performed every couple of hours and only takes a few seconds. Keep the elbow and shoulder limber.

### **Activity**

Gentle grasping can be started after the stitches are removed and can gradually be increased. Four weeks after surgery, strengthening can be started with putty type exercises.

### **Return to Work**

It is possible to return to work the day after carpal tunnel surgery has been performed, but no significant lifting or grasping with the hand can be performed. 4-6 weeks after surgery most patients can return to their regular work activities. The surgical scar will be tender for a full 3 months after the surgical procedure while the scar matures.

**Make your appointments with the office and the hand therapy according to the post operative notes after surgery.**