

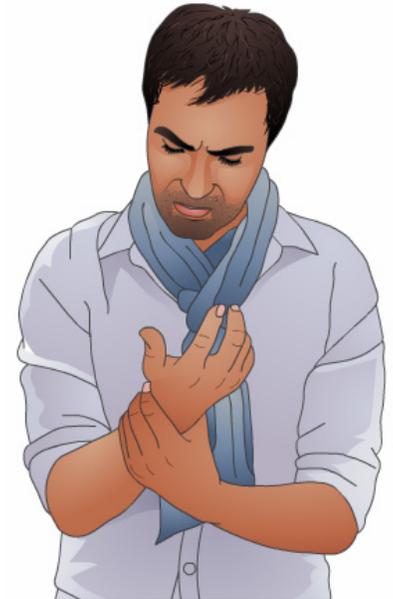
Introduction

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a common condition that causes pain and numbness in the hand. It also affects the hand's usage.

Health care providers may recommend surgery for people suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome.

If your health care provider recommends surgical treatment for your condition, the decision whether or not to have surgery is also yours.

This reference summary explains open carpal tunnel release. It talks about the causes and symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. It also explains the risks and benefits of the surgery. This summary discusses the open type of carpal tunnel release.

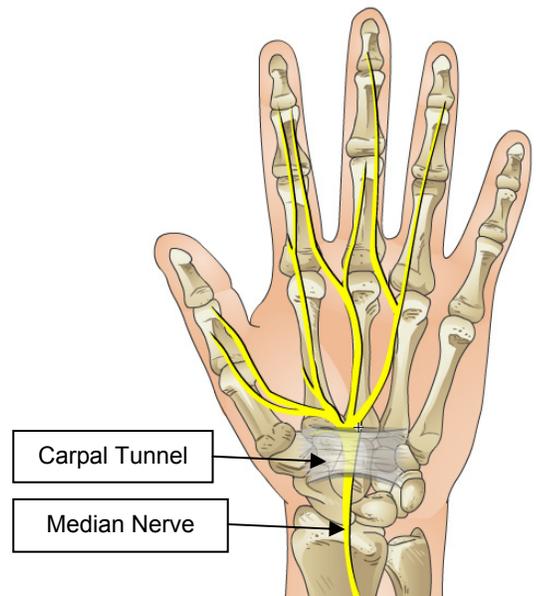


Anatomy

A major nerve called the median nerve passes through a narrow tunnel at the wrist. This tunnel is called the carpal tunnel, which means the wrist tunnel. The floor of the carpal tunnel is formed of bones called the carpal bones. The roof consists of a thick ligament.

The median nerve supplies sensation to the:

- Thumb.
- Index finger.
- Middle finger.
- Half of the ring finger.



This document is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a doctor or healthcare professional or a recommendation for any particular treatment plan. Like any printed material, it may become out of date over time. It is important that you rely on the advice of a doctor or a healthcare professional for your specific condition.

It also supplies some thumb muscles. Several tendons pass through the carpal tunnel along with the median nerve. They allow the muscles in the forearm to move the fingers.

Symptoms and Their Causes

When the ligament in the carpal tunnel thickens, it puts pressure on the nerve. This can cause numbness and pain in the first three to four fingers of the hand. These symptoms usually affect the palm of the hand starting in the wrist and shooting down into the hand.

Some numbness and pain may be seen in the forearm. But numbness and pain caused by carpal tunnel syndrome will not travel higher than the forearm. The symptoms are worse at night. They may wake you up. People with carpal tunnel syndrome tend to drop objects because of the weakness, numbness and clumsiness.

The most common reason for carpal tunnel syndrome is the thickening of the ligament. But there may be other reasons for this syndrome. Other reasons include swelling of the tissues and the bones surrounding the carpal tunnel, as in rheumatoid arthritis. Fractures can affect the nerves. This can result in carpal tunnel syndrome.

Diseases such as diabetes can also cause symptoms similar to carpal tunnel syndrome. This is because diabetes may damage the median nerve.



Alternative Treatments

Avoiding repetitive motion may help with the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. Bracing with a splint may help with the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. Injection of steroids in the carpal tunnel itself is also a possibility. Surgery may help if no other treatments have worked to ease your symptoms.



This document is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a doctor or healthcare professional or a recommendation for any particular treatment plan. Like any printed material, it may become out of date over time. It is important that you rely on the advice of a doctor or a healthcare professional for your specific condition.

Surgical Treatment

All surgical procedures aim at taking the pressure off the nerve by cutting the ligament. The operation is done through a skin incision. It usually takes about 15 to 30 minutes. When the ligament is divided, the pressure on the nerve is relieved. That is why this surgery is called carpal tunnel release.

The operation can be done under local or general anesthesia. Carpal tunnel release is an outpatient operation. You may be able to go home the same day of the operation.

Risks and Complications

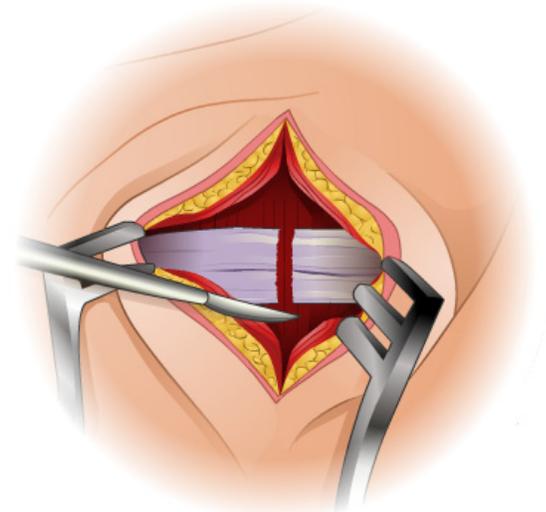
This operation is safe with excellent results. But there are several possible risks and complications. These are unlikely. But they are possible. You need to know about them just in case they happen. By being informed you may be able to help your health care provider detect complications early.

The risks and complications include those related to anesthesia and those related to any type of surgery. Risks related to anesthesia will be discussed with you in greater detail by your anesthesiologist.

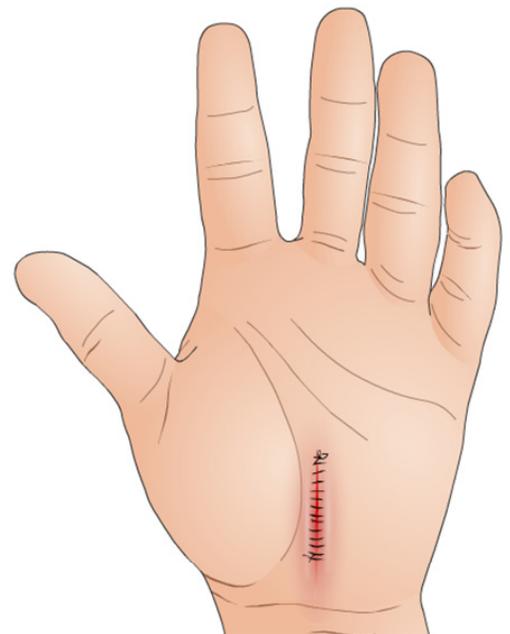
Some of the risks are seen in any type of surgery. These include:

- Infection, deep in the carpal tunnel or at the skin level.
- Bleeding.
- Skin scar.

Other risks and complications are related specifically to this surgery. These are rare. But it is important to know about them. The nerve may be injured, resulting



Carpal Tunnel Release



This document is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a doctor or healthcare professional or a recommendation for any particular treatment plan. Like any printed material, it may become out of date over time. It is important that you rely on the advice of a doctor or a healthcare professional for your specific condition.

in weakness, paralysis and loss of feeling in the hand. The tendon may be injured, resulting in weakness of the hand. There is also the possibility that the operation may not help the symptoms. It may even make them worse.

After the Surgery

Your hand will be bandaged. Your health care provider will ask you to keep your hand elevated above the heart level to reduce swelling. When you shower, you will need to cover the dressing with a plastic bag.

Your health care provider will tell you how long it will take before you go back to work. This depends on your age, type of work, your surgery and other factors. Your health care provider will arrange for a follow-up visit to examine the incision and remove any sutures. Your health care provider will indicate the hand rehabilitation program suitable for you.

Summary

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a common condition that causes pain and numbness in the hand.

Avoiding repetitive motion may help with the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. Bracing with a splint also may help ease symptoms.

Surgery to release the carpal tunnel can help relieve your hand pain and numbness when other non-surgical treatments fail. All surgical procedures aim at taking the pressure off the nerve by cutting the ligament. The operation is done through a skin incision.

This operation is safe with excellent results. But complications may happen. Knowing about them will help you detect them early if they happen.



This document is for informational purposes and is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a doctor or healthcare professional or a recommendation for any particular treatment plan. Like any printed material, it may become out of date over time. It is important that you rely on the advice of a doctor or a healthcare professional for your specific condition.