

## Work

You are advised to take two weeks off work (until your stitches have dissolved). Please be advised by the nurses on the Unit.

The Unit can provide you with a doctor's certificate if required.

## Driving

You must not drive for at least one week following the procedure. You must be fully mobile and comfortable, and able to operate the steering wheel and gear stick comfortably and safely, before driving again. This may take 1–2 weeks. The Driving Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) advise you to ring your insurance company to inform them when you are driving again.

## Will I need a follow-up appointment?

It is not normally necessary to see the surgeons again after this procedure. If, however, your hand is causing any problems at four – six weeks from surgery you should ring and book yourself in to the next hand clinic on **01483 464158**.

## Reference source

Mr Magnussen, Consultant, RSCH

[www.nhs.uk/carpal-tunnel-syndrome/pages/treatment.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/carpal-tunnel-syndrome/pages/treatment.aspx)

## Contact details

If you require further advice, please do not hesitate to contact the Day Surgery Unit.

### Day Surgery Unit

**Telephone:** 01483 406783  
Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm

### Out of hours advice

Call 111 (formerly NHS Direct)  
[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### Surgical Short Stay Unit

**Telephone:** 01483 406828

## PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm  
Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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# Carpal Tunnel Decompression



Day Surgery Unit  
Surgical Short Stay Unit

## What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by pressure on the median nerve (the main nerve into the hand) as it travels through a tunnel in your wrist. Symptoms may include tingling, numbness or pain in the hand and fingers. Symptoms are often worse at night. Surgery can cure symptoms of tingling and pain straight away, but numbness in the fingers may take weeks or months to disappear.

## What does surgery involve?

The procedure is known as 'carpal tunnel decompression' It takes about 15 minutes and is usually performed under local anaesthetic. The wrist is injected with the anaesthetic, which may sting for a short while. A tight cuff is then placed around the upper arm and inflated – this prevents bleeding during the operation, and may be uncomfortable for a short while.

A small cut is then made in the wrist, loosening the wall of the carpal tunnel and releasing pressure on the median nerve. The wound is stitched, more local anaesthetic is inserted and the hand is dressed with a bulky bandage.

## What are the alternatives?

If your symptoms are mild you can try wearing a wrist splint or having a steroid injection into the wrist. If your symptoms really are bothering you, then a carpal tunnel operation may be the best intervention.

## What are the potential risks and complications?

Complications during and following this procedure are rare. They include:

- **Excessive bleeding and/or swelling.** Pressure and a cold compress (e.g. a packet of frozen peas) may help relieve these symptoms. If you are concerned, telephone the Day Surgery Unit or see your GP.
- **Rarely, infection of the wound sites.** If your wound becomes very tender, red or swollen, contact the DSU or your own GP for advice.

## What will happen after my operation?

### **Will the operation hurt?**

The local anaesthetic in your wrist will prevent pain or discomfort for up to six hours following surgery. Painkilling tablets should be taken before the local anaesthetic begins to wear off. You will be notified of when to take them.

You will be prescribed painkilling tablets to take home. These carry a prescription charge unless you are exempt.

### **Wound Care**

There will be a dressing over your stitches and a bandage covering the wound. The bandage can be removed 48 hours following surgery. Your stitches will be dissolvable. They can take up to 10-14 days to dissolve. Keep the wound covered with a small plaster for 10 days.

Some swelling is to be expected for a few days; this is temporary. Resting the arm up as much as possible for the next couple of days will help keep the swelling to a minimum, you will be provided with a sling.

If your wound becomes red, swollen or very tender, or develops a discharge, please contact the Day Surgery Unit or your own GP for advice.

### **Elevation and activity**

Keep your arm rested up in the sling provided for the next 2–3 days. Rest your arm on pillows or cushions to sleep. Do not walk with your hand dangling, or sit with your hand in your lap.

You may move your arm or hand as much as is comfortable to do so - the nursing staff will advise you. You will be provided with a sheet of exercises to do to help increase your hand strength and flexibility. Avoid any activity that may pull or damage your stitches until they have been removed.

Your grip strength is likely to be reduced by the surgery. Performing your exercises will help to regain this strength – this may take 3–6 months.

### **Stitches**

These will dissolve by 10-14 days following surgery. If you have any concerns about your stitches please see the Practice Nurse at your own GP.

Your scar may feel tender and firm to touch. After your stitches have dissolved, massage the scar with moisturiser to reduce these symptoms.