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Post-op Instructions for Carpal Tunnel Release

These instructions are to compliment the information given by the nursing staff and physical therapists. They cover many of the common questions.

Wound Care/Showering

- Dressings are to be kept clean and dry. A small amount of clear drainage or bleeding is normal. If the ace wrap feels too tight, you may loosen it and re-wrap it.
- You may remove the ace bandage and dressing 2 days following surgery. Dressing may be removed all the way down to the stitches. Please leave the stitches intact. You may re-cover them with gauze pads or a large Band-Aid.
- You may get the incision wet when showering 2-3 days after surgery. The shower should be brief and the wound patted dry with a clean towel. No baths or soaking the incision until 3-4 weeks after surgery and scabs are absent/fully healed incision.
- If you develop purulent drainage (thick white or greenish in color) coming from the wound, increasing redness, or if you are having a temperature of 101 or higher, please report these symptoms to your surgeon or the doctor on call.

Pain/Swelling

- To lessen pain and swelling, ice your hand for the first 1-3 days after surgery. Put the ice in a zip lock bag or towel and place over the surgical site. We recommend 20 minutes, 4-5 times per day. Do not place ice or ice packs directly on the skin as this may cause damage to the skin if on for long periods of time.
- Narcotic pain medication may be prescribed for use, if needed, after you leave the hospital in limited amounts. Try to wean down/off as soon as you are able. Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or anti-inflammatories (Ibuprofen or Aleve) as the first line of medications for pain control if appropriate. Add the narcotic medication for additional pain control if needed. It can help to stagger your pain medications.
- Also, narcotic medications can cause constipation so you may want/need to use an over-the-counter stool softeners/laxative as needed.
- Swelling to some degree is common after surgery. To reduce swelling, elevation is very helpful. Elevate the hand above the heart level for the first 2-5 days after surgery. Elevation for 30 minutes every 2 hours is a good initial recommendation. Excessive pain and swelling should be reported to your surgeon.

Exercises

- Gentle hand and wrist range of motion exercises can begin the day of surgery. After the bulky dressings have been removed on post-op day three, you may start hand-strengthening exercises by squeezing a soft ball.

Driving

- To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills. Also, you must feel strong and alert.

Follow-up

- Make sure an appointment has been scheduled for you at Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine for approximately 10-14 days after surgery.

