

## **Cubital Tunnel Release**

(Post-surgical instructions for Dr. Andrew Federer)

**PRESCRIPTIONS:** You may be given a prescription for pain medication. You may not feel the need to take this medication, as the pain with this surgery can typically be controlled with ibuprofen or Tylenol. Within the first 4-5 days, your pain should decrease to where you will need less or no pain medication. Please use your pain medication carefully, as we will probably not renew your medication. Please take this medication with food if it bothers your stomach. If you are normally able to take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) (e.g. ibuprofen, naproxen, Motrin, Aleve etc.) then it is okay to take this medication in addition to any potential narcotic pain medication you may have been prescribed today. Oftentimes patients who have had previous GI issues (such as GI bleeding) or kidney issues have been recommended to not take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories by their primary care physicians.

*It is illegal in the State of Colorado to drive a car or operate machinery while taking an opioid pain medication, such as the one you may have been prescribed today. Taking this medication in a manner that is different from the prescription instructions can lead to opioid overdose and serious medical complications. After discontinuing the medication, it is not unusual to have symptoms of opioid withdrawal such as irritability, nausea, and/or trouble sleeping.*

**ICE AND ELEVATION:** You may use ice for the next 48 hours to help alleviate the swelling and pain. Elevation of the affected hand as much as possible for the next 48 hours is important for decreasing swelling and helping with pain relief. If the bandage gets too tight, the ace bandage may be loosened.

**DRESSING:** Please keep the dressing as it is for 5 days after today and keep it dry. At that point you may remove nearly all dressings, but try to leave the steri-strips (white tape on the skin) in place. You may cover the wound with band-aids or a small dressing if you wish, but this is not essential. At this time, it is OK to get the wound wet in the shower. It is not unusual to have a small amount of dried blood on the skin or steri-strips, or to have the steri-strips fall off. There may be a small suture that you see coming out of the skin near the end of the incision - this is normal, and will be addressed at your first post-operative visit. However, refrain from *submerging* your arm in water (pool, lake, jacuzzi, etc) until after your first post-operative visit. Do NOT place any ointments, lotions, or creams on the incision until after your first post-operative visit.

**ACTIVITY AND WORK:** For the most part, let discomfort be your guide. You are encouraged to move your fingers and wrist by gently making a fist and straightening the fingers all the way out. Do this as much as you need to make your fingers move fully and keep the swelling down. Strong gripping, lifting, or using the elbow is often uncomfortable and detrimental to the healing process. In particular, significant or repeated flexing of the elbow should be avoided. You might miss a variable period of time from work and hopefully this issue has been discussed prior to surgery. You may not do any heavy work using your affected elbow for about one or two weeks. Please share this information with your employer and bring any forms that need to be filled out to my medical assistant.

**EXPECTATIONS:** Hopefully, within the first 4-5 days, your pain will change to where you will need less pain medication. Please use your pain medication carefully, as we very rarely will prescribe any further opiates. The scar will mature over the next 6 months to a year and will become much less visible and tender. If your discomfort or swelling increases, after initially getting better in the first few days, infection may be a concern. Normal time for infection (which is very rare) is between the third and seventh day after surgery.

If you are concerned for any reason, please contact us at **(720) 516-9417** and ask for a **Hand Team Medical Assistant**.

**FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT:** This should have been given to you when surgery was scheduled, and will be with Dr. Federer. At this appointment we will take a look at your incision and remove any sutures necessary and set further expectations and/or treatment plan.

Please call **(720) 516-9417** should you have any general questions or need to adjust your post-operative appointment.

For after hour ***Emergencies*** please call **(720) 516-9417** and ask for the Orthopedic Physician on call.