



BAY AREA ORTHOPEDIC
SURGERY & SPORTS MEDICINE

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Post-Operative Treatment for Carpal Tunnel Release

Phase I: 0-2 weeks

Clinical Goals:

- Achieve 80% of wrist ROM, full ROM of thumb → small in 2 weeks

Testing:

- Thumb, fingers and wrist ROM

Exercises:

- At 2 days, a wrist immobilization splint is applied and should be worn over tubigrip between exercises and at night.
- AROM and PROM exercises for hand and wrist are performed, 6 times per day, 10 repetitions each
 - Wrist flexion and extension, radial and ulnar deviation
 - Finger and thumb flexion and extension
 - Thumb circumduction, abduction, and adduction, if needed
- Nerve gliding exercises, 3 times per day
 - Median nerve gliding exercise: Move the extremity through the following 5 positions. Hold each position for 5 seconds and repeat 5 times

1. Make a fist with the palm down
2. Straighten fingers
3. Extend (lift) wrist
4. Straighten elbow and turn palm up
5. Use other hand to stretch thumb into further extension

- Ice 3-4 times per day after exercise
- Grip and thenar strengthening using putty, 3 times per day for 10 minutes is begun at 7-10 days post-op
- Putty exercises

Phase II: 2-3 weeks

Clinical Goals:

- Full wrist and hand ROM by 3 weeks
- Decrease splint wear during the day as symptoms improve
- Perform ADLs and may return to work if it is a one-handed job or only requires light use of upper extremity.

Testing:

- Hand and wrist ROM
- Grip strength

Exercises:

- Begin wrist strengthening exercises at 2 weeks
- Continue strengthening with putty and ROM exercises as needed

- Scar massage when wound is healed, 4 times per day
- An elastomer or silicone pad can be worn over scar at night as needed

Clinical follow-up:

- The patient normally is seen only with doctor appointments, 1-2 times per month, at this time and only if needed.

Phase III: 3 weeks to 3 months

Clinical Goals:

- Return to work with a soft wrist brace, if needed, or, if applicable, an anti-vibration glove
- Return to heavy labor by 3 months
- Decrease splint wear during the day
- Continue to wear splint at night for 2-3 months

Testing:

- Hand and wrist ROM
- Grip strength

Exercises:

- Wrist ROM exercises are performed until full motion is achieved
- Hand and wrist strengthening

Clinical follow-up:

- Patient is seen in therapy only with doctor appointments, 1-2 times per month, at this time and only if needed.