
Hand and Upper Extremity Clinic

Brian A. Janz MD

Carolina Johnson PA-C

Theresa (Terri) Nye

Orthopaedic Associates of Central Maryland (OACM)
A member of the Centers for Advanced Orthopaedics (CAO)

910 Frederick Rd.
Catonsville, MD 21228
410-644-1880

www.mdbonedocs.com

www.DrJanz.com

Endoscopic Carpal and Cubital Tunnel Release Surgery **Post Surgery Information and Care**

After an endoscopic carpal and cubital tunnel release, keep the surgical dressing clean and dry, elevate your hand to reduce swelling, and perform finger range-of-motion exercises as tolerated. Avoid heavy lifting and repetitive motions for at least 4 weeks, do not drive while taking narcotic pain medication, and protect your hand from water until your follow-up appointment or your doctor advises otherwise.

Wound care and dressing

- **Keep it dry:** Keep the initial dressing clean and dry for the first few days. You can cover it with a plastic bag to shower, but keep it dry otherwise.
- **Dressing changes:** Do not remove the initial dressing unless instructed by your doctor. Your doctor will remove it at your follow-up appointment.
- **Drainage:** It's normal for the incision to ooze a small amount of clear, yellow, or bloody fluid for a day or two.
- **When to call the doctor:** Contact your doctor if you see thick, white pus, or if redness around the incision worsens.

Pain and swelling management

- **Elevation:** Keep your hand elevated above your heart as much as possible, especially for the first few days, to minimize swelling.
- **Medication:** Take pain medication as prescribed. Follow your doctor's instructions and let pain guide your activity level. You may be advised to use over-the-counter pain relievers after the first few days.
- **Ice:** You can apply ice to the area as directed by your surgeon.

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Activity and movement

- **Finger and wrist movement:** Begin gentle finger and wrist range-of-motion exercises immediately to prevent scarring. Gently open and close your hand and bend and extend your wrist within a comfortable range.
- **Rest:** Rest your hand when you feel tired. Avoid strenuous activities.
- **Light activity:** You can start light activities like writing, typing, or preparing food as tolerated, but avoid pain-inducing movements.
- **Avoid heavy lifting:** For the first 1-2 weeks, avoid lifting anything heavier than a cup of coffee or soda can (about 1-2 pounds).
- **Avoid impact:** Do not engage in any activities that cause vibration or impact for at least 6-8 weeks, such as using power tools or gardening with a heavy-duty tiller.
- **Driving:** Do not drive until you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication and can comfortably and safely grip the steering wheel with both hands.

Follow-up and long-term care

- **Follow-up appointments:** Attend your follow-up appointments, as your doctor will remove sutures and assess your progress.
- **Physical therapy:** Your doctor may recommend physical therapy, which is often a key part of the recovery process to help with scarring and regain strength.
- **Return to activities:** The recovery process varies, but many patients may take 3-6 months to feel ready for all activities. Gradual return is key.
- **Scar massage:** Your doctor may recommend massaging the scar with lotion to help reduce sensitivity and promote healing once the incision is fully closed.