

Carpal tunnel release

Introduction

We know that you are currently experiencing a long wait for your carpal tunnel release operation and that this can be very difficult.

We have developed this advice and information to help support you whilst you wait. It is designed to help you manage your symptoms and to help prevent these from getting worse. It also provides information about what you should do if your symptoms do worsen.

This guide has been written by the national experts in carpal tunnel syndrome and draws on the latest evidence and advice about how best to support people waiting for your procedure.

It includes links to advice and information which you can click on if using online, and details with regard helplines and other supportive websites.

You can also download and print this support guide and share with your family, friends and carers.

Waiting for your carpal tunnel release

Carpal tunnel syndrome is when there is pressure on a nerve in your wrist. The carpal tunnel is made up of bones at the bottom and ligament at the top. Pressure inside the carpal tunnel causes symptoms which include pain and pins and needles. Carpal tunnel release surgery is undertaken if symptoms have not improved despite other treatments, have become more severe or are associated with nerve damage causing muscle weakness.

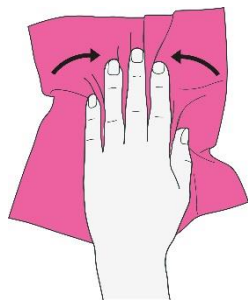
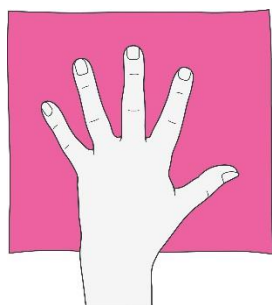
Our [pain management resource](#) includes advice to help you manage your ongoing pain. Prolonged waiting in pain can create [worries about money](#), [difficulties if you're a carer](#) and can impact your [mental health](#). Have a look at these links on this web platform for further advice and support if needed.

You may have been advised previously to reduce or stop activities that are causing symptoms. These are usually activities where you bend your wrist, grip something

hard or use vibrating tools. We suggest that you continue to follow this advice. If your symptoms do improve, you can start doing the activities again, gradually increasing the time spent doing them. Stop if your symptoms worsen.

You may have also been advised to use a wrist splint, either during activities which increase symptoms and/or at night if you are awoken by pains and pins and needles. You may have been given splints previously, or you can buy online or in many local pharmacies. Again we suggest that you continue to use your splint if this helps.

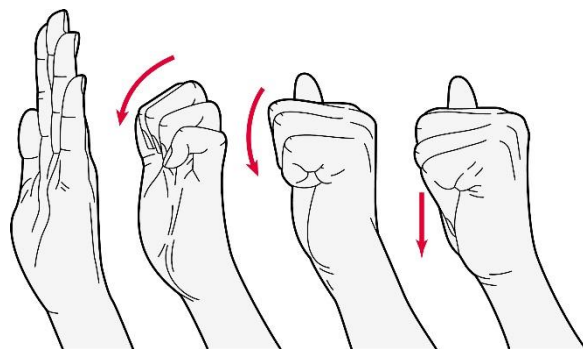
It is important to maintain movement and strength around your hand and wrist. You may have been given exercises to help previously and it is safe to continue these if you're able to. If not already doing so, the following [exercises](#) may help too. Start with those you find the easiest and then add a few more as you feel more confident. If your pain increases, or keeps you awake and this lasts for a few days you may have done too much. If this happens take a couple of days rest, and then as you feel better gradually start again.



Finger strengthening

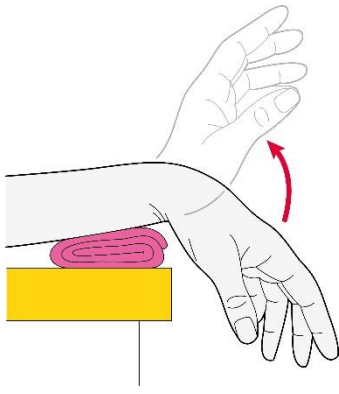
Begin with the palm of your hand on a tissue or towel on a table, fingers apart. Pull your fingers together by pressing your hand down into the table and bunching up the towel between your fingers. Repeat. You can also do this without

using a towel or tissue, and simply by pressing down on the table and squeezing your fingers together and then stretching them apart.



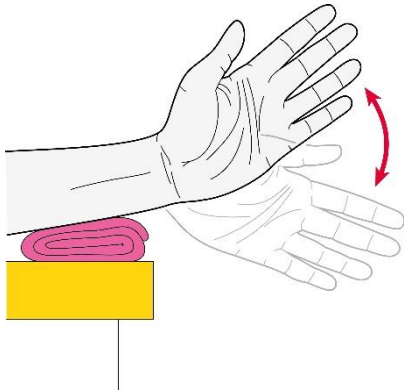
Finger tendon glide stretch

Start with the fingers extended straight out. Make a hook fist, return to a straight hand. Make a full fist, return to a straight hand. Make a straight fist, return to a straight hand.



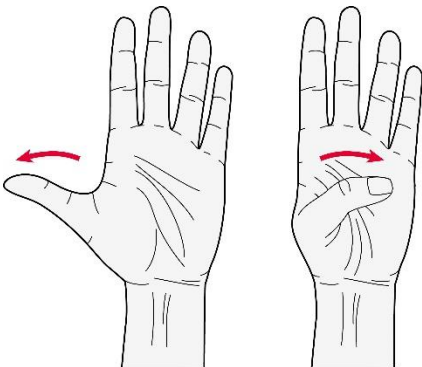
Hand lift

Place your forearm on a flat surface, like a table, with your hand hanging over the edge, palm facing down. A rolled-up towel under your wrist might provide comfort. Keeping your fingers relaxed, move your hand upward until you feel a gentle stretch, then return to the starting position.



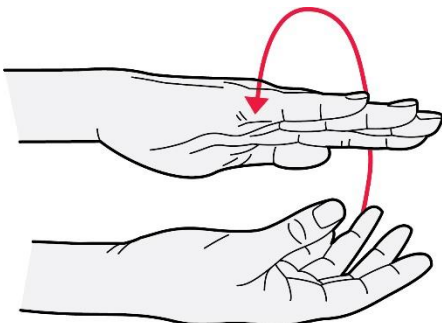
Hand wave

Support your forearm on a table on a rolled-up towel for padding or on your knee, thumb facing upward. Move the wrist up and down through its full range of motion, as if you are waving.



Thumb stretch

Hold your hand out in front of you, as if you're saying stop. Begin with your thumb positioned outward. Move the thumb across your palm and then back to the starting position.



Wrist turn

Bend your elbow to 90 degrees with your palm facing down. Rotate your forearm, so that your palm faces up and then down. You can stand or sit to do this.

Being active is important for your overall physical and mental wellbeing. Whilst you may be limited by your wrist, there is still a lot you can do. The [Lets move with Leon](#) programme from Versus Arthritis is also worth a look. The 12-week programme

consists of 30-minute movement sessions, offering a holistic, full-body programme that will improve strength, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness. You don't need any special gear, and there's no cost. Leon specialises in working with people with arthritis and related conditions.

Arthritis Action has developed a range of exercises you can [try in a chair in your own home](#). The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy's [Stronger My Way](#) hub also provides advice, reassurance and helpful videos to help you maintain general strength to help you carry out day to day activities. The NHS has also produced tools hints and tips to help you [get active](#). Find what works for you, and it doesn't matter if you can't do some exercises because of your wrist, any movement is good.

Maintaining a balanced diet and a healthy weight can also help. The Versus Arthritis [eating well with arthritis](#) information is worth a look. The NHS [lose weight](#) resource also has lots of support available including a free 12 week weight loss plan.

[Quitting smoking](#) is one of the best things you can do for your general health, and it will also help you recover better from your operations, so can [drinking less](#) alcohol.

What should I do if my wrist and hand are getting worse?

If your pain gets worse

If you experience a significant increase in pain and/or pins and needles which does not improve over a week, or worsening pain up the affected arm please contact your GP practice.

If you hand gets more weak

If you notice that your hand is becoming weaker, you feel clumsier or you start dropping things please contact your surgical team.

Where can I find additional information?

Some people find it useful to speak to others with arthritis and/or waiting for their operation. Both [Versus Arthritis](#) and [Arthritis Action](#) run local groups and offer a range of other support services.

[Versus Arthritis](#) also have a free Helpline (0800 5200 520) which can provide information and support on a wide range of topics related to arthritis; it is available from Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm.

Useful websites

Arthritis Action www.arthritisaction.org.uk

NHS quitting smoking www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/

NHS drink less

www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/

NHS lose weight

www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/

Versus Arthritis

www.versusarthritis.org