

Carpal Tunnel Surgery

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of the NHS to provide some routine services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

You don't need to ring your GP, or the hospital caring for you for an update on waiting times because all the information is available on the My Planned Care website.

This guidance has been supported by clinicians who are responsible for your care to support and to help keep you well whilst waiting for your procedure.

Carpal Tunnel - Introduction

Carpal tunnel syndrome is pressure on a nerve in your wrist. It can cause pain, numbness and burning or tingling sensation to the hand and fingers and can also cause weakness and a feeling of clumsiness in the hand. If your symptoms get worse and other non-surgical treatments have not worked the surgery may be recommended.

During Carpal Tunnel Release surgery, an injection is given to numb your hand so you do not feel pain (local anaesthetic) and a small cut is made in the palm of your hand near your wrist. The tissue which forms the roof of the carpal tunnel inside your hand is cut so it no longer puts pressure on the nerve. This surgery is usually performed as a day case which means you go home the same day and don't need to stay in hospital overnight.

Whilst the surgery is usually performed under local anaesthetic as a day case, you will need to have someone to drive you home as it can be uncomfortable to use the hand for the first few days.

Guidance for Patients

There are some things you can do to help manage your symptoms while you wait for your surgery.

Wear a wrist splint

A wrist splint is something you wear on your hand to keep your wrist straight. It helps to relieve pressure on the nerve, and you can wear it at night while you sleep. Wrist splints can be purchased online or from pharmacies.

Stop or cut down on things that may be causing it

Stop or cut down on anything that causes you to frequently bend your wrist or grip hard, such as using vibrating tools for work or playing an instrument.

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Manage your pain

You can take pain relief such as Paracetamol, Anti-inflammatory creams, Codeine, Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. If you need any advice, your local pharmacy will be able to help.

There are several resources to help you manage your pain:

[10 ways to ease pain](#)

The Chartered Institute of Physiotherapy has produced helpful [guidance for managing pain and improving your quality of life](#)

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

This information is designed to help you manage your symptoms and stay in the best possible health while you wait. It is however possible that some of your symptoms may get worse while you are waiting for your surgery. There are some things to look out for that would indicate you should seek medical help:

- If your symptoms get worse to the point that it is unmanageable with the pain relief suggested by the pharmacist or doctor and you are struggling to cope with it.
- If you start to see a lot of muscle loss in your hand or if you find you lose strength in your hand and you are not able to grip a mug or kettle for example.
- If you develop persistent numbness in your hand.

If you experience any of these issues, we recommend getting in touch with your hospital team. The number and email should be on your last hospital appointment letter.

Alternatively, you can contact your GP practice. Whilst your GP does not have access to the hospital waiting list to get you seen sooner, if your condition is getting worse, they can assess you, give advice and can contact the hospital on your behalf if necessary.

How you can support yourself while you wait for your procedure

Good Mental Health

It is normal to be anxious about having a procedure, relaxation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises can all help. It's important that you ask for help if you feel you need it, and your GP practice can advise you on support in your local area.

Please keep in touch with your GP or mental health professional if you are already under their care for depression or anxiety.

Here you will find some [general information on mental health issues](#) and some [top tips to improve your mental wellbeing](#). Apps to support your health, mental health, and wellbeing:

Find tested and approved mental health apps [here](#).

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- [Feeling anxious?](#)
- [Feeling stressed?](#)
- [Feeling low?](#)
- [Trouble sleeping?](#)

If you do experience any of these issues, we recommend getting in touch with your hospital team. The number and email should be on your last hospital appointment letter.

Alternatively, you can contact your GP practice. Whilst your GP does not have access to the hospital waiting list to get you seen sooner, if your condition is getting worse, they can assess you, give advice and can contact the hospital on your behalf if necessary.

If your condition gets worse but you already have your date for surgery, we recommend getting in touch with your hospital team. The number and email for this should be on the hospital appointment letter.

General information

Please watch this useful [video](#) from the Royal College of Anaesthetists which offers advice on preparing for a procedure.

There is also some useful information available on North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care System for information about [Who we are | North East and North Cumbria ICS](#)