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Hand & Microvascular Surgery

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CARPAL TUNNEL RELEASE

POST-SURGICAL FAQ'S

- **When do I see Dr. Berschback after surgery?**

You will return to see Dr. Berschback for your post-op visit about 10-14 days after surgery.

- **When can I use my hand?**

You will be able to begin using your hands for light activities usually the night of surgery. You will have a soft bandage on the hand that leaves your fingers and wrist free to move. You can perform simple functions such as feeding yourself, brushing your teeth, carrying a cup of coffee, etc. and continue to increase those as tolerated.

- **Why is my hand numb?**

The local anesthetic that is used during the procedure often leaves some or all of the fingers in your hand numb for many hours. This may last well into the night of your surgery. The numbness from the anesthetic usually wears off by the following morning, but it may last a little longer. The numbness from your carpal tunnel syndrome may take time to resolve depending upon how severe the symptoms were before surgery, and how long the problem has been going on for. This varies greatly from patient to patient, and may also be affected by your age. Each patient's nerves recover at a different rate, so please don't be discouraged if all of your pre-operative symptoms are not gone right away. Residual numbness usually resolves gradually over the ensuing weeks to months.

- **When may I shower or bathe?**

You may begin to shower or bathe as soon as you like. If the original surgical dressing is still on, take care to not get it wet. Two days after surgery, you may remove your dressing and start getting your incision wet in the shower. Do not submerge the incision underwater for an extended period of time, such as in a bathtub, pool, or hot-tub.

- **When do the stitches come out?**

Stitches will be removed at your post-op visit 10-14 days after surgery.

- **What if my pain medication causes itching or nausea?**

It is not uncommon for pain medications to cause these two side effects. If you experience itching you may take Claritin or Benadryl to help with this. Remember to take your pain medication with food. You should try to take anti-inflammatory medication first (such as Aleve, Advil, Motrin, etc.), and then take the narcotic pain medication if you are still having pain.

- **What about swelling?**

Swelling is quite common following these procedures. Do your best to keep the hand elevated above the level of your heart. Moving the fingers to open and close into a tight fist is also encouraged. Taking ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) will help with swelling (note: do NOT take acetaminophen/ Tylenol in addition to your narcotic pain medication because the narcotic pain medication also has Tylenol in it. You may take 1 or the other, but not both).

- **When may I drive?**

You may begin driving again when you feel comfortable behind the wheel AND you are no longer taking any of the narcotic pain medications. If you would feel comfortable driving next to yourself on the road, it is probably safe for you return to this activity.

- **When can I go back to work?**

It depends on the type of work you do. Those with jobs that are more sedentary and do not require heavy loads on the hands are often able to start returning to their duties within 1-2 days. Jobs that involve extensive heavy lifting and strain on the hands may take 3-4 weeks before they are able to return to work functions more normally. This is something quite unique to every patient's situation and can be discussed more specifically with Dr. Berschback at your office visit.