

## **Carpal Tunnel Release**

### **What is carpal tunnel release surgery?**

Carpal tunnel release surgery is performed on those who suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome, where too much pressure is placed on the median nerve in the wrist, causing pain or numbness. Carpal tunnel release surgery can help relieve this pain by cutting the carpal ligament to release pressure on the nerve.

### **Who can benefit from carpal tunnel release surgery?**

Carpal tunnel syndrome can affect anybody, and risk of developing the syndrome increases with age. It is not always known why the carpal tunnel syndrome develops, although some put this down to lifestyle and working practise (for example jobs involving stress on the wrist and hands). These factors can cause aching, numbness or tingling in the hand (and sometimes the arm), which may become permanent. Individuals who suffer from these symptoms should speak to their doctor about considering carpal tunnel release surgery.

### **Procedure**

There are two types of carpal tunnel release surgery, which are performed under local or general anesthetic.

- **Endoscopic carpal tunnel release surgery** - Endoscopic carpal tunnel release surgery involves one or two small incisions being made in the palm of the hand, and a small camera being inserted so that the surgeon can view the surgery on a TV screen. The carpal ligament is then cut which releases pressure on the median nerve and creates space for the nerves and ligaments in the carpal tunnel.
- **Open carpal tunnel release surgery** - Open surgery involves a cut of around 6cm being made in the palm of the hand (possibly extending to the wrist) and then through the underlying muscle and tissue, so that the carpal ligament can be released. As with endoscopic carpal release surgery, this releases the pressure on the median nerve. The surgeon then closes the ends of the carpal ligament, leaving them separated. After both procedures, the incisions are then closed with sutures and the hand bandaged and supported with a splint.

### **Recovery**

Recovery can vary for individuals, and the length of time off work will be subject to what type of job you do. If your job involves heavy lifting for example, you will need to take more time off work. Sutures will be removed 2 weeks after your operation, and the majority of cases will see significant improvement, if not a full recovery. The healing process may take between several weeks and several months to complete, depending on the severity of nerve damage.

## **Risks**

Risks for carpal tunnel release surgery include a reaction to the anesthetic, infection of the wound, bleeding, lack of improvement following surgery, nerve damage, pain, scarring, scar tissue build-up, nerve sensitivity and hand weakness.