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**Surgery:** Carpal Tunnel Release

**DIET**

Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jello, soups, etc.)

Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated

**WOUND CARE**

Maintain your operative dressing, loosen bandage if you feel the bandage is too tight. Make sure you keep your hand/arm elevated at or **HIGHER** than the level of your heart. This will help control swelling as much as possible. When lying down build a pillow/blanket ramp so your arm is not hanging down too low.

It is perfectly fine if some blood/drainage gets on the dressing. THIS IS NORMAL. If blood soaks onto the outer bandage, do not become alarmed, reinforce with additional dressing

Remove surgical dressing on the **third post-operative day** – if minimal drainage is present, apply waterproof Band-Aids over incisions and change daily.

To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry for the first 7 days following surgery – you may shower with waterproof band-aids after the second post-operative day but AVOID immersion of the operative site under water (i.e. bath/pool)

Please do not place any ointments lotions or creams on the incisions for **1 month** after

Once the sutures are removed (at least 7-10 days) post operatively you can begin to get the incision wet in the shower (water and soap lightly run over the incision and pat dry). NO immersion in a bath until given approval by our office (typically at least a month)

**MEDICATIONS**

Local anesthetics are injected into the wound at the time of surgery. This will wear off within **8-12 hours**. Patients commonly encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery when swelling peaks.

Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as directed on the bottle. You will also have antibiotics which I will prescribe. Take these until gone!

**Pain Medications utilized after surgery are narcotics and the law requires that the following information be given to all patients that are prescribed narcotics:**

**CLASSIFICATION:** Pain medications are called Opioids and are narcotics

**LEGALITIES:** It is illegal to share narcotics with others and to drive within 24 hours of taking narcotics

**POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS:** Potential side effects of opioids include: nausea, vomiting, itching, dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, constipation, and difficulty urinating.

**OTHER POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS:**

Opioid tolerance can develop with use of pain medications and this simply means that it requires more and more of the medication to control pain; however, this is seen more in patients that use Opioids for longer periods of time.

Opioid dependence can develop with use of Opioids and this simply means that to stop the medication can cause withdrawal symptoms; however, this is seen with patients that use Opioids for longer periods of time.

Opioid addiction can develop with use of Opioids and the incidence of this is very unlikely in patients who take the medications as ordered and stop the medications as instructed.

Opioid overdose can be dangerous but is **unlikely when the medication is taken as ordered and stopped when ordered**. It is important not to mix opioids with alcohol or with any type of sedative, such as Benadryl, as this can lead to over sedation and respiratory difficulty.

Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication

Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication

Please avoid alcohol use while taking narcotic pain medication

If you are having pain that is not being controlled by the pain medication prescribed, you may take an over the counter anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen (600 800mg) or naproxen in between doses of pain medication. This will help to decrease pain and decrease the amount of narcotic medication required. Please take as directed on the bottle.

**ACTIVITY**

**Weight bearing status:** NO heavy lifting. Some light use of the hand is fine for daily activities

Do not engage in activities which increase pain/swelling (prolonged periods of using the hand or pushing off or pushing yourself up with the hand) for the first 7-10 days following surgery.

NO driving until instructed otherwise by physician

May return to sedentary work ONLY or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable

**ICE THERAPY**

Icing is very important in the initial post-operative period and should begin immediately after surgery.

Use icing machine continuously or ice packs (if machine not prescribed) for 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off as much as tolerated. Remember to keep leg elevated to level of chest/heart while icing. Avoid frostbite to the skin by not using icepacks for more than 30 minutes at a time.

You do not need to wake up in the middle of the night to change over the ice machine or icepacks unless you are uncomfortable.

**EXERCISE**

Begin gentle wrist/finger motion the day/day after your surgery. This should be gentle exercises and no aggressive activity should be performed early on before your wound heals.

Formal physical therapy (PT) typically begins a few days after surgery. A prescription and protocol will be provided at the time of surgery unless deferred by Dr. Varacallo.

**EMERGENCIES**

Contact Dr. Varacallo’s office at 814-375-6200 if any of the following are present:

\*Painful swelling or numbness (note that **some** swelling, numbness, and bruising is normal)

\*Unrelenting pain or calf pain

\*Fever (over 101° F – it is normal to have a low grade fever (<100°) for the first day or two following surgery) or chills

\*Redness around incisions

\*Color change in foot or ankle

\*Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)

\*Difficulty breathing

\*Excessive nausea/vomiting

*If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the office at 814-375-6200*

*If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room*

**FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS**

Your first post-operative appointment will be scheduled with either Dr. Varacallo or one of his associates/assistants. The goal of your first visit will be to do a quick wound check, make sure you have started physical therapy (unless deferred), and to answer any further questions you have regarding the procedure/recovery

**Other general points:**

**Mobilization:** The best way to avoid a blood clot is to do your exercises as instructed multiple times per day. Typically you can wait to start these daily exercises until after your first physical therapy appointment. Your therapist will work with you to come up with a daily routine of home exercises to do multiple times per day.

**Long travel/flights:** Avoid long periods of sitting (without leg elevated) or long distance traveling for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, plans for longer travel, flights, and vacations will vary from person to person and will depend on your individual recovery following your surgery. If you are planning any long travel (car or plane) in the first 2 months following your surgery, be sure to get up and walk at least once every hour .

**Return to driving:** Avoid driving when on narcotics and when you have a brace in place on your extremity. Beyond these two “rules”, I will discuss with you when is a reasonable time frame to expect to be able to return to driving. Again, this will vary depending on the operative extremity (right or left), the car(s) you drive (manual/stick shift versus automatic), and the distance you plan on driving. You are not cleared to drive until either myself or one of my assistants gives you permission from the office.

**Return to (full duty) work:** There is no “rule” on an exact time frame for return to work and this can vary significantly from patient to patient. That being said, every job varies from person to person and based on individual labor requirements, options for light duty / part-time adjustments, and I will do my best to discuss and plan with you for a reasonable time frame for expectations to return to full duty. Please contact the office if additional documentation is required.

**Stool Softeners:** You will be at greater risk of constipation after surgery because of being less mobile and taking the pain medications.

* Take stool softeners as instructed by Dr. Varacallo while on pain medications.

 **\*Over the counter Colace 100 mg 1-2 capsules twice daily**

* You may stop the Colace once you stop taking pain medications after your surgery OR if you notice that your stools become too loose or too frequent
* If constipation occurs despite use of stool softeners, you are to continue the stool softeners and add at least one of the following:

 \*Over the counter MiraLax Laxative Power as directed

 \*Over the counter Milk of Magnesia 1 ounce daily as needed

 \*Over the counter Dulcolax oral tabs (bisacodyl USP 5mg) as directed

 \*Suppository or a fleets enema can also be utilized for constipation and can be obtained over the counter as well

* If above interventions are unsuccessful in inducing bowel movements, please contact your family physician's office/Dr. Varacallo’s office
* Drink plenty of fluids and eat fruits and vegetables during your recovery time

**Any questions, please call Shera with Dr. Varacallo’s office at 814-375-6200**