

Endoscopic Carpal Tunnel Surgery

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Do you have difficulty completing activities of daily living such as picking up pills, buttoning buttons, holding utensils, or have a weak grip? A condition called carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) may be the likely cause. Patients who suffer from CTS may also report symptoms such as numbness in the thumb, index, and middle fingers throughout the day. Tens of thousands of people each year are treated for CTS. Evaluation by a physician specializing in hand surgery can lead to a proper diagnosis, which can lead to proper treatment.

WHY DOES IT OCCUR?

The carpal tunnel is a space in the hand where 9 tendons and a nerve pass through the forearm to the hand. Swelling around the tendons can occur, which leads to less room for the nerve. This leads to numbness and tingling in the fingers or even pain in the hand. Occasionally, the pain in the wrist can lead to elbow or even shoulder pain. Swelling around the nerve can be from several causes: fractures, thumb arthritis, pregnancy, rheumatoid arthritis, and thyroid problems.

Diagnosis of CTS can be made through an electromyogram (EMG). However, X-rays are usually needed to assess other conditions such as arthritis, fractures, and dislocations. This allows for proper, individualized treatment for the hand.

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS?

CTS can be treated with a variety of methods all varying on the degree of nerve compression. Night splints for the wrist are usually the first step. Occasionally injections are helpful to decrease the swelling around the nerve. Some patients need surgery to relieve the pressure on the nerve.

The newest technique for carpal tunnel release is an endoscopic release with an incision at the wrist level rather than in the palm. This allows the surgeon to see the nerve through a camera and release the pressure on the nerve through a small ½ inch incision. This has led to much less pain and swelling, faster recovery, and smaller

scars. Many patients return to work within a couple days or even the next day after surgery. Many patients do not have stitches after surgery, but have surgical glue used to close their incisions.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO ENDOSCOPIC CARPAL TUNNEL RELEASE VS THE TRADITIONAL INCISIONAL CARPAL TUNNEL RELEASE?

Carpal tunnel surgery is performed as outpatient surgery. Endoscopic carpal tunnel surgery has decreased pain, swelling and down time for patients as compared to open surgery. Newer research has shown that endoscopic carpal tunnel is as effective as the larger incision techniques with the same long-lasting benefit.

Traditionally, a large incision in the palm of the hand and wrist was required to see the nerve and tendons. This allowed for relief of the compression on the nerve. Patients typically had a longer recovery with pain in the palm of the hand and even difficulty with grasping items. As techniques evolved, surgeons began making smaller incisions in the palm to release the nerve compression. This led to a faster recovery and decreased pain. Typically, full recovery is seen from a few weeks to a few months after surgery.

To schedule your individualized consultation, please call 847-690-1776.

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Raymond Metz, Jr., M.D., joined Core Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in 2014 and treats patients in both Hoffman Estates and Elk Grove Village, Ill.

Dr. Metz is an Orthopedic Hand Surgeon whose focus includes adult and pediatric hand disorders, such as fractures, nerve disorders, arthritis, and Dupuytren's disease. His objective is getting patients back to normal activity through conservative and operative measures. If necessary, he utilizes the latest surgical techniques with the goal of sending patients home quickly and pain free.

His education and training includes: B.S., Wabash College, Cum Laude; M.D., Indiana University School of Medicine; Residency, Department of Orthopaedics, Indiana University School of Medicine; and Fellowship, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center-Hamot, Pa. Dr. Metz is a member of the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the American Society for Surgery of the Hand, the American Association of Hand Surgeons, the Chicago Society for Surgery of the Hand, and the Chicago Medical Society.