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POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CARPAL AND CUBITAL TUNNEL

This is a list of general postoperative guidelines and instructions for your recovery period after surgery. Please remember that Dr. Wang may have specific “do’s and don’ts” in your case. These will be discussed with you prior to your discharge. Apply these recommendations with common sense. All restrictions apply until your follow-up appointment around 2 weeks after surgery. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns.

1. If you have any trouble breathing at all, call 911, go to the emergency room, or call the office depending on the severity.
2. Keep dressing dry for three days. On the 4th day, you may remove the dressing and get the incision wet, but do not soak (i.e. no dishes, no baths).
3. Elevate the surgical arm above your heart to help reduce swelling. Avoid heavy grasping or direct pressure to the incision (i.e. using mouse, leaning on elbow).
4. Cubital tunnel patients: A sling may be placed on you after surgery. This is to limit movement. Wear the sling at all times for the first three days, then as tolerated.
5. You may ride in the car, but you cannot drive yourself until your dressing is removed and you feel comfortable using your hand and arm.
6. Monitor the incision(s) to observe for signs of infection. These may include;
 - a. Pain and tenderness at the surgical site that persists or increases
 - b. Diffuse redness (a little redness around the staples is not uncommon and should not be cause for alarm).
 - c. Excessive swelling.
 - d. Drainage through the incision.
 - e. Excessive warmth at the incision.
 - f. Fever, chills, loss of appetite.

Call the office or go to the emergency room at once if any of these signs or symptoms is present.

7. A low grade temperature is common after surgery, and is usually due to not taking deep breaths and or being too inactive. This is called atelectasis, and it can lead to pneumonia. Staying out of bed, walking as much as you can, and taking deep breaths should bring down the temperature. If the temperature persists, is over 101°F, or is associated with wound problems (see below) or any other problems, call the office.
8. If you notice any new tenderness, pain, swelling in your legs (especially the calf), call the office or go to the emergency room as this could be a sign of a blood clot and could be life-threatening.
9. As discussed prior to surgery, the purpose of the operation was to prevent worsening of neurological symptoms, with the hopes of improving the pain/numbness/tingling, which may persist after surgery due to the nerve damage done to the previously compressed nerve. It is not uncommon to feel a little “reminder” of the pain from time to time. If symptoms persist or increase, call the office.
10. Questions regarding your return to work will depend on the type of job you have, type of surgical procedure, and your general recovery. Time off from work may be 1 week to 3 months. We will be happy to fill out any forms needed for a fee.
11. You may be given a prescription for pain medication. Pain medication should only be taken when you have pain. You may call your pharmacy for refills on medications and the pharmacy will contact our office for approval. Prescriptions are called in and refilled during office hours only. Due to new laws, refills of some pain medications (especially hydrocodone) may require an office visit.
12. If not already done, call to make your appointment to have your sutures or staples removed around 14 days after surgery.