



Postoperative Instructions for Endoscopic Carpal Tunnel Release (ECTR)

General Information: Compression of the median nerve in the region of the carpal tunnel, located at the base of your palm, causes numbness and tingling. The transverse carpal ligament forms the roof (top) of the carpal tunnel. The bones in your wrist form the floor of the tunnel. Through the tunnel, pass all the tendons that bend your fingers and the median nerve. During surgery, an endoscope releases the transverse carpal ligament, from the inside out, through a small incision just proximal to the wrist flexion crease. Dr. Verheyden releases similar tissue in the distal forearm that is potentially compressing your median nerve. In total, ECTR releases approximately 7 cm. of tissue, opening up the carpal tunnel, and decreasing pressure on the median nerve.

Pain Control: Dr. Verheyden encourages strict ice, elevation, and finger range of motion exercises for the first 72 hours. Over the counter ibuprofen and/or Tylenol is often very effective and frequently all that is needed for pain control, especially if you adhere to a strict ice, elevation, and finger range of motion exercise program in the post-operative period. Take the ibuprofen and/or Tylenol with food and water. Dr. Verheyden typically gives a prescription for a few pain pills. Most patients take only a couple or no pain medications after this minor surgery. Wean from the narcotics as soon as possible and take the narcotic pain medications only as prescribed. As long as ice is not in direct contact with skin, place ice 24/7, or as much as you can, in the palm to decrease swelling and pain.

Wounds: Surgical release of the transverse carpal ligament causes tenderness at the incision and in the palm. This is common and should resolve and improve over the course of about six weeks. Gently massaging this area will help the discomfort resolve. You may note bruising in your hand and distal forearm. This is also common and will resolve.

Dressing: Remove the large soft dressing in 72 hours and apply Band-Aids.

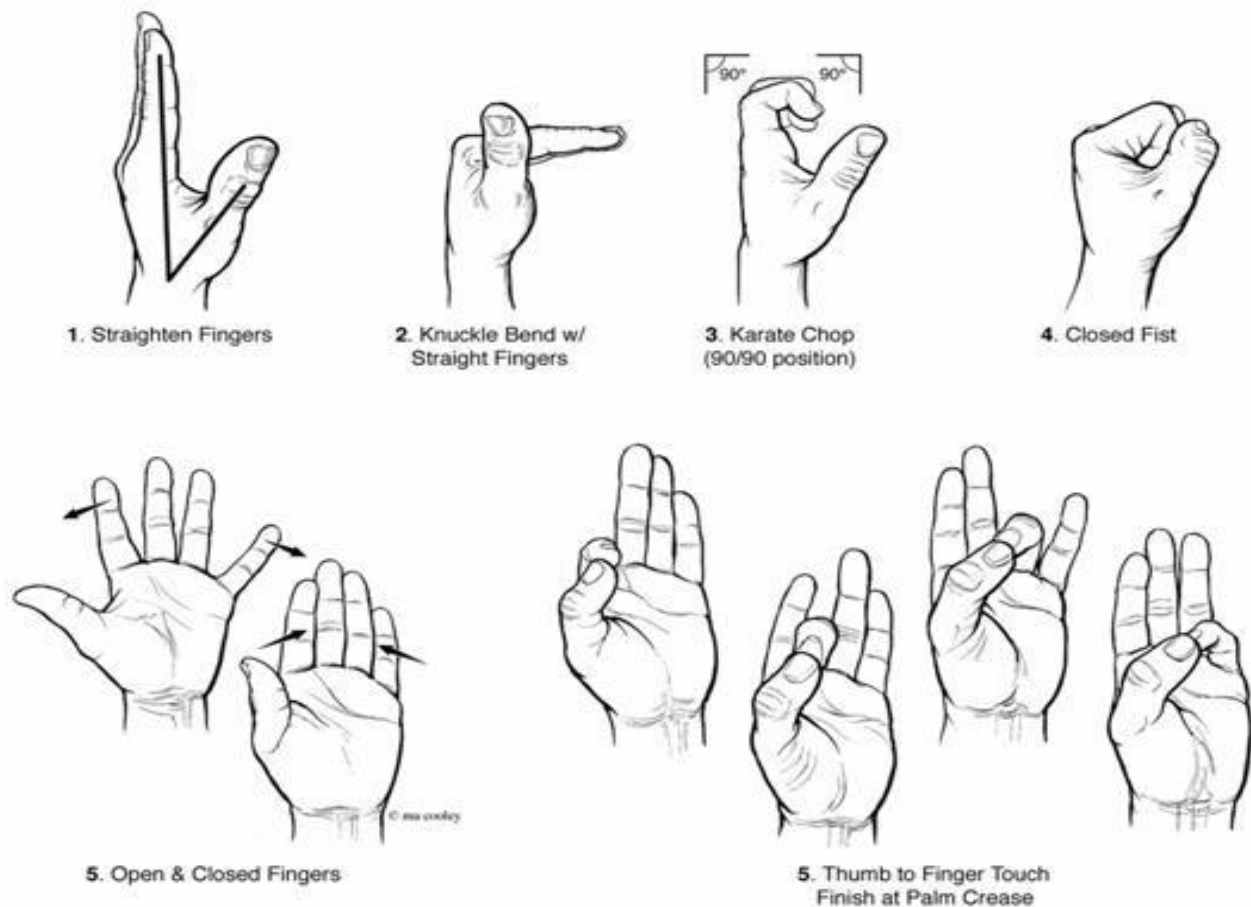
Bathing: It is fine to shower or wash your hands after surgery if you keep your dressing clean, dry, and intact. After dressing removal, you may shower and wash the wound gently with soap and water. Do not soak your hand in water, hot tubs or pools until at least 24 hours after suture removal.

Activity: Encourage finger range of motion exercises immediately. This will help decrease swelling and discomfort. For the first 72 hours, keep your hand above the height of your heart to decrease postoperative swelling. Patients should have full finger range of motion at their two-week postoperative visit. You may use your hands and fingers as you tolerate. Keyboarding is fine. It frequently takes several weeks for the swelling and inflammation to recede. Work on wrist range of motion exercises. Avoid wrist hyper flexion until after the first postoperative visit. Avoid heavy lifting the first couple of weeks. Massage over the incision and in the palm where surgery released the transverse carpal ligament to decrease sensitivity. You will be tender in this region. Sometimes this tenderness persists for 6-8 weeks. No pounding, impact, or vibration activities for at least 6-8 weeks. Specifically, Dr. Verheyden recommends no jackhammers, chainsaws, or similar impact/vibration activities or impact/vibrating tools for a minimum of 6-8 weeks.

Additional: The numbness and tingling often disappears quickly after surgery. Patients often note an improved ability to sleep, as the nocturnal pain, numbness and tingling resolves. However, in severe and longstanding carpal tunnel cases, the numbness and tingling may disappear slowly after surgery and sometimes, if the nerve has already “died,” from lack of blood flow, the symptoms may not completely go away. It may take several months for grip strength and pinch strength to return to normal. Patients typically note weakness with opening doors and jars for up to three months after surgery.

Follow-up: Approximately 7 days for suture removal and wound check.

Precautions: To minimize the risk of infection, Dr. Verheyden recommends absolutely no swimming, hot tubs, long hot showers or steam showers, doing dishes, wearing ski gloves or heavy plastic gloves until 24 hours after suture removal. Keep the wound clean and avoid heavy use. Contact the office immediately for severe pain, elevated temperature, or any sign of infection at 541-382-3344.



3 Sets of 10 repetitions, 6-8 times per day