



**Heidelberg
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Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery

What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition often experienced by people who use their hands repetitively in day-to-day activities, such as desk workers, musicians or assembly line workers. Other people at higher risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome include:

- Women between 40 and 60 years of age
- Pregnant women
- Anyone who experiences rapid weight gain
- People with certain types of arthritis

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by compression of the median nerve at the wrist, which results in hand numbness, loss of dexterity, muscle wasting and decreased functional ability in the hand.

Some people naturally have a smaller carpal tunnel than others, which can eventually lead to problems. In many cases the underlying cause cannot be found and in other cases there is a combination of factors. Other causes include:

- **Arthritis**
Arthritis, especially rheumatoid arthritis, can cause inflammation and swelling.
- **Pregnancy**
Hormones associated with pregnancy cause general fluid retention, which can compress the nerve. Carpal tunnel syndrome triggered by pregnancy usually goes away soon after birth.
- **Wrist Fractures**
Bone fragments from wrist fracture can irritate the tenosynovium or reduce the viable space in the carpal tunnel.
- **Repetitive Strain Injury**
Tendons in the carpal tunnel can become irritated and inflamed by awkward postures and repetitive hand movements.

What do we do?

Carpal tunnel syndrome can be treated with carpal tunnel release surgery. Traditional surgery involves up to a 2- inch incision in the palm and wrist area, whereas endoscopic surgery involves one or two half-an-inch incisions and the use of an endoscope. During the surgery, the transverse carpal ligament will be dissected to release the pressure on the median nerve and enlarge the carpal tunnel. Your surgeon will decide which options are best for you based on your general and medical conditions. **General or local anaesthetic?**

After your Carpal Tunnel Release Surgery

- You may be advised to practice certain post-operative procedures for better recovery and to avoid further complications
- Elevate the hand above heart level to reduce swelling
- A splint may be worn
- Ice packs to the surgical area to reduce swelling
- Keep the surgical incision clean and dry and cover the area with plastic wrap when bathing or showering
- Physical therapy may be ordered to restore wrist strength
- Eating a healthy diet and not smoking will promote healing

Safety and Risks

Most patients suffer no complications following carpal tunnel release surgery. However, some patients may suffer from pain, infections, scarring, and nerve damage causing weakness, paralysis, or loss of sensation and stiffness in the hand and wrist area.