

Orthopaedic Procedure

Carpal Tunnel Release

1. What is carpal tunnel release?

Carpal tunnel release (CTR) is a surgical procedure aimed at alleviating the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) by releasing pressure on the median nerve in the wrist. CTS occurs when the carpal tunnel, a narrow passageway in the wrist, becomes compressed, leading to symptoms such as pain, numbness, tingling, and weakness in the hand.

2. What are the advantages of carpal tunnel release?

- **Relief from symptoms:** The primary advantage of carpal tunnel release is the relief of symptoms associated with carpal tunnel syndrome. This includes a reduction in pain, numbness, tingling, and weakness in the hand and fingers.
- **Improved hand function:** After surgery, patients often experience improved hand function, allowing them to perform daily activities with greater ease and dexterity.
- **Prevention of nerve damage:** Carpal tunnel release can prevent further damage to the median nerve, potentially avoiding long-term nerve-related complications.
- **Quick recovery:** Carpal tunnel release is typically an outpatient procedure with a relatively quick recovery period. Many patients can resume light activities within days or weeks.
- **Minimally invasive options:** Some carpal tunnel release surgeries can be performed using minimally invasive techniques, resulting in smaller incisions, less scarring, and faster recovery.

3. What are the potential risks?

Carpal tunnel release surgery is generally considered safe, but it carries some risks, including infection, scarring, nerve or blood vessel injury, or incomplete relief of symptoms. Anaesthesia-related risks may also be present. It's crucial to follow post-operative instructions and attend follow-up appointments to minimise these risks.

4. What happens after?

Recovery following carpal tunnel release is often rapid and associated with significant symptom relief. Patients can typically return to light activities and work within a few days to weeks, depending on their occupation. Physical therapy may be recommended to improve hand strength and function.

Full recovery can take several weeks to months, with the extent of improvement varying among individuals. Patients are encouraged to adhere to post-operative care, including wound care and rehabilitation exercises, to optimise their outcome. After successful carpal tunnel release, most individuals experience a significant reduction in pain, numbness, and improved hand function, enhancing their quality of life and ability to perform daily tasks.