

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Information for patients

Your doctor has referred you to us because you may have symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome (trapped nerve at the wrist). When we see you there will be time for you to tell us about your problem and for us to examine you to find out what the problems are.

Sometimes it is necessary for us to arrange further tests (X-rays, blood tests or nerve conduction studies) to confirm the diagnosis and an operation may have to be postponed until the results are received. In most cases the diagnosis is straightforward and in some clinics we can proceed to offer you treatment immediately **if you wish** (at the same appointment).

If you are on clopidogrel, dipyridamole (persantin) or Warfarin please contact the surgery for further information – as soon as you receive this information leaflet.

Various options for treatment are available, **not always surgical i.e.**

1. If the symptoms are mild, a wrist splint may be recommended.
2. An injection of steroid around the nerve at the wrist is often useful for more symptomatic patients.
3. If the symptoms are severe, an operation is usually required.

If you are offered an operation, the following information may be useful.

Please ensure that you remove all rings, false nails and nail varnish from your fingers before your appointment and that you wear a loose sleeved top.

Please also ensure your hands are thoroughly washed and clean and free of infection.

The operation is done under local anaesthetic. This numbs the site and wears off after a few hours. The fingers may also go temporarily numb.

The operation consists of dividing the ligament on the front of the wrist to relieve pressure on the nerve. The procedure takes about 30-45 minutes.

Please ensure that you have someone to drive you home afterwards.

POST-OP CARE

Dressings

These comprise of wool and crepe bandages. They must be kept clean and dry until the stitches are removed. Arrangements will be made to remove the stitches at either your local surgery or the nearest community hospital depending on where you live. The stitches will be removed between 10-14 days post-op.

Wearing the sling

Use the sling for the first 3-4 days until you are feeling comfortable and you are sure there is little or no swelling in the fingers. Take the arm out occasionally to exercise the elbow and shoulder. At night keep the sling on and sleep in a semi-upright position or place the hand on some pillows to elevate it.

Finger exercises

Start immediately and repeat frequently. Fully straighten and bend the fingers for a few minutes every hour. This helps to prevent stiffness around the nerve.

Pain control

We recommend you take some painkillers such as paracetamol as soon as you get home and then regularly for the first 48 hours, following the instructions on the packet.

We also recommend taking vitamin D for one month after surgery to help with healing and to reduce the risks of chronic regional pain syndrome.

Follow-up

You will not routinely receive a follow up appointment and you will be discharged back to the care of your GP.

RECOVERY

The hand can only return to normal when the ligament that was divided during the operation has reformed. This will take several weeks. During this phase the hand will feel sore and weak and although some of the symptoms will have been relieved, sensation in the fingers can take several months to improve and some pain and discomfort can persist for several weeks. Although this operation is thought of as a quick day-case procedure the recovery period can be prolonged but the long term results are generally good.

Once the stitches are removed we would encourage you to use the hand for all day to day activities and to undertake finger and wrist stretching exercises. However heavy lifting and hard manual work should be avoided for about four weeks.

The scar will be raised and tender at first but will soften and fade with time. You can help this process by massaging the scar with E-45 cream or Vaseline; three or four times a day after the stitches have been removed.

You will probably need some time off work. The period depends on the type of work you do. Heavy work may need 4-6 weeks. Please discuss this with your employer before your appointment but bear in mind that sick leave will only be necessary if you proceed to surgery. If your employer requests a 'sick certificate' or you need one for any other reason we can give you a sick certificate (Med 3) --please ask the surgeon before or after the operation.

COMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Any surgical procedure has an element of risk attached to it and occasionally things do not turn out as well as expected. Fortunately with carpal tunnel release the risks are small and the outcomes usually very good. (90-95%)

Failure to improve after surgery is about 5-10%.

Recurrence of symptoms after successful surgery is rare, reported rates vary from 1/200-1/500 and can occur from 6 months to 20 years after surgery. Recurrent symptoms can be treated by re-operation but the results are not as predictably good.

Serious infection is extremely rare, less than 1/1000, but you must take care to keep the dressings clean and dry. If you experience a lot of pain in the hand, swelling of the fingers, high fever or flu-like symptoms you should immediately seek advice. Minor, superficial infections may require antibiotics.

Damage to the nerve during the operation, causing numbness in the fingers or weakness of the thumb muscles is also extremely rare, less than 1/1000.

Scar tenderness can persist for several months but usually settles down in time.

Some patients who are not progressing satisfactorily because of persistent post-op pain, stiffness or finger swelling may require physiotherapy but this is unusual.

A rare complication of injury to the hand, including surgery is “chronic regional pain syndrome”. The hand is disproportionately painful and stiff with some swelling. You should seek advice promptly if you experience such symptoms. This can last for many months and is difficult to treat.

WHERE TO GET ADVICE

If you have any concerns during the post-op period you can get advice or help from one these sources.

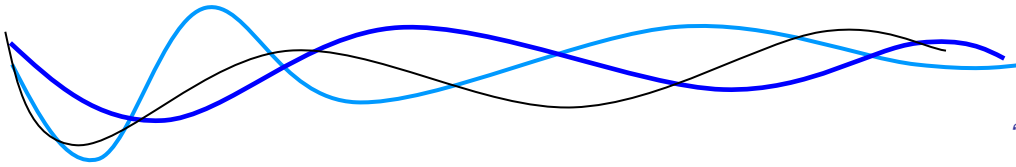
1. First contact one of the surgical team at Probus on 01726 885104;
2. Or Contact your local surgery;
3. Out of hours, contact the NHS ‘111’ number; or
4. The A and E department of your local hospital

Severe pain, excessive swelling or bandages that are too tight or bloody should prompt you to seek advice. Take this letter with you and insist that the dressings are removed and the wound inspected before redressing.

STUDENTS

We are a teaching and training practice. Sometimes medical students or doctors in training may wish to observe or participate in procedures or operations. They will always be supervised by a senior doctor and will only participate with your approval.

If you do not wish to be seen by trainees or students you are perfectly entitled to withhold your consent.



"To improve the health and well-being of those we care for"

Directions to Probus Surgical Centre

Probus Surgical Centre, Tregony Road, Probus, Truro, TR2 4JZ

From North Cornwall

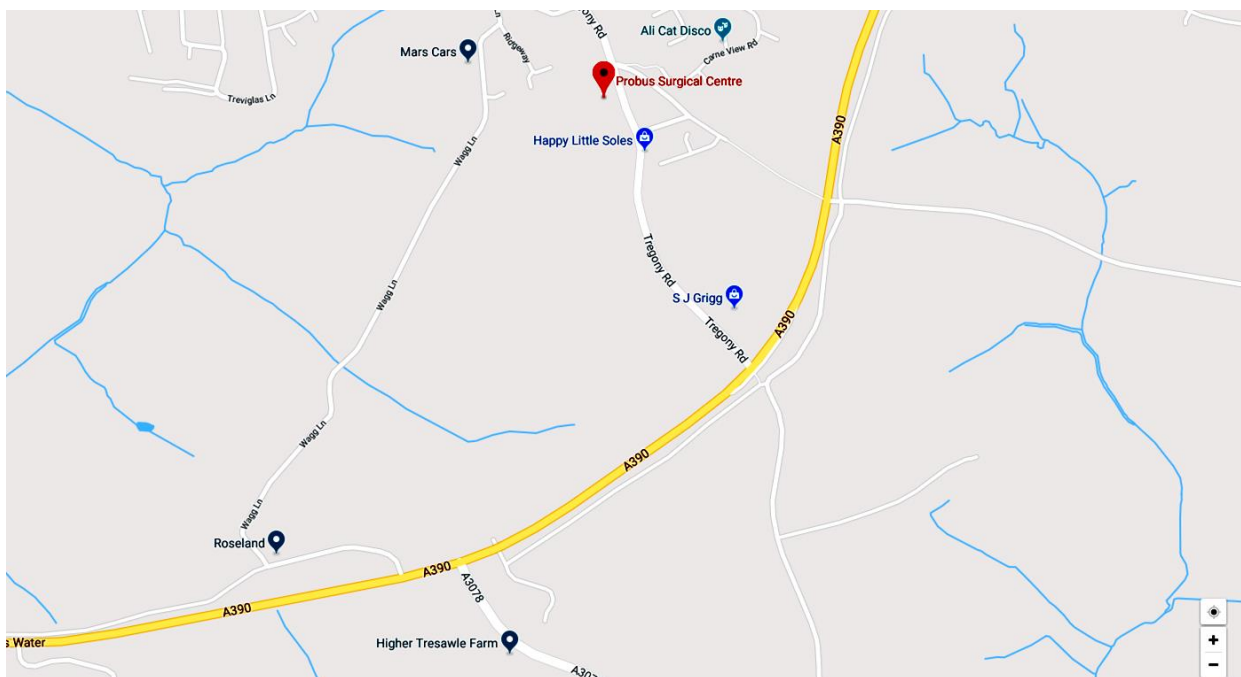
From Fraddon take the Grampound Road direction. Drive through Grampound Road and continue until you come to the main A390. (Then follow directions below)

From West Cornwall

From Truro follow the road for St Austell. Drive through Tresillian and continue on the Probus bypass (A390), you will pass the turning on the right for Tregony (A3078), continue on the A390, and take the next turning on the left, Tregony Road (opposite a large layby). Continue up this hill, passing S J Griggs Garage on your right, then Wainhomes. Continue on Tregony Road, until you reach Probus Surgery and Surgical Centre, take the second entrance into the car park.

From East Cornwall

From St Austell follow the Truro Road (A390). Drive through Grampound and continue until you reach the new roundabout at the start of the Probus Bypass. Take the first exit, continuing on the A390. Take the 2nd exit on the right onto Tregony Road (opposite a large layby). Continue up this hill, passing S J Griggs Garage on your right, then Wainhomes. Continue on Tregony Road, until you reach Probus Surgery and Surgical Centre, take the second entrance into the car park.

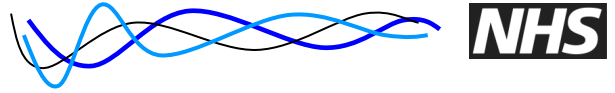


TAP – Transport Access People – Community transport service (Subsidiary of Age UK Cornwall & Isles of Scilly)

This is a door to door service and a small charge will be made – payable to the driver on the day of your journey. To arrange non-emergency transport for your healthcare appointment you can call:

Cornwall residents – 01872 223388

Devon residents – 08450 539100



Probus Surgical Centre

Help Us Help You Stay Safe

Important information when attending your appointment (updated June 2022)

* **REQUESTING SUPPORT** - if you require support to attend the appointment because of exceptional circumstances, please contact us on 01726 885104 to request this ahead of your appointment (please use the number on your appointment letter) – authorisation will be given as appropriate.

Prior to attending your appointment:

- Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap & water for 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub

Please inform us, before your appointment if:

- **You have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or are waiting for a COVID-19 test result**
- **You think you may have symptoms of COVID-19:**
 - A high temperature or shivering (chills) – a high temperature means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
 - A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
 - A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
 - Shortness of breath
 - Feeling tired or exhausted
 - An aching body
 - A headache
 - A sore throat
 - A blocked or runny nose
 - Loss of appetite
 - Diarrhoea
 - Feeling sick or being sick

Attending your appointment:

Please use the hand sanitiser available in the Reception & Surgical Centre before and after your appointment.



We ask that all patients and visitors wear a face mask or covering when entering the building. If exempt, please advise staff.