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Post-Operative expectations after carpal tunnel/cubital tunnel release

- Carpal tunnel surgery can provide improvement of symptoms in most patients (> 90% of patients).
- Complete relief however is dependent on the severity of your symptoms before surgery and may only occur in 50% of patients
- The goals of surgery are to:
 - Prevent progression to the point where there is permanent numbness/weakness
 - Improve nerve pain and possibly sensation
- Usually night and the throbbing nerve pain is the first noticeable improvement
 - This can happen from the first days or several months after surgery
 - Obviously, we hope for as soon as possible
- Next is decreasing numbness/improved sensation
 - This will take several months because the nerve needs to regenerate and heal
 - There is an unknown time period where the nerve needs to “wake” up
 - Nerves then heal at a rate of 1 inch per month
 - Look at the distance from the carpal tunnel to your fingertip
 - This is why recovery after cubital tunnel is less reliable and takes longer
- Recovery of motor and strength will occur much later but is far less reliable
 - Significant muscle wasting within the hand or paralysis usually indicates that there will not be any significant improvements after surgery
 - Subtle feelings of weakness may improve after many months and up to years after your procedure
 - Again, this is unreliable and cannot be guaranteed after surgery
- Overall, we hope your recovery is as quick as possible, but the maximum benefit may take as long as 6 months to 1 year after your surgery

- The same healing process that occurs for your incision will occur below for your released carpal tunnel

Possible complications after this procedure:

- Infections are rare but can occur, causing wound dehiscence
 - Depending on the severity this can be treated with antibiotics and local wound care or additional surgery
 - It is important to keep your incision clean and dry and to minimize sweating, gripping and activity that may compromise your incision
- You may experience pain along your incision several months after your surgery, even after the incision is healed
 - This is called pillar pain
 - This pain may originate from tenderness of the prominent bony structures and possibly the released carpal ligament and is not believed to be from the skin itself
 - If this occurs, we will try to diminish symptoms with desensitization exercises
 - Symptoms tend to improve by 6 months
- Complex regional pain syndrome is a condition where your hand has severe chronic pain following surgery
 - Often there is an unknown cause and unfortunately, there is no reliable way to prevent this undesirable complication
 - Variations in surgical technique has not been shown to affect this complication
 - Treatment may require extensive pain and nerve therapy
 - Different rates of occurrence have been quoted in the literature with the most recent data (2019) suggesting that this complication has a chance of occurring between 0.1% to 0.3%