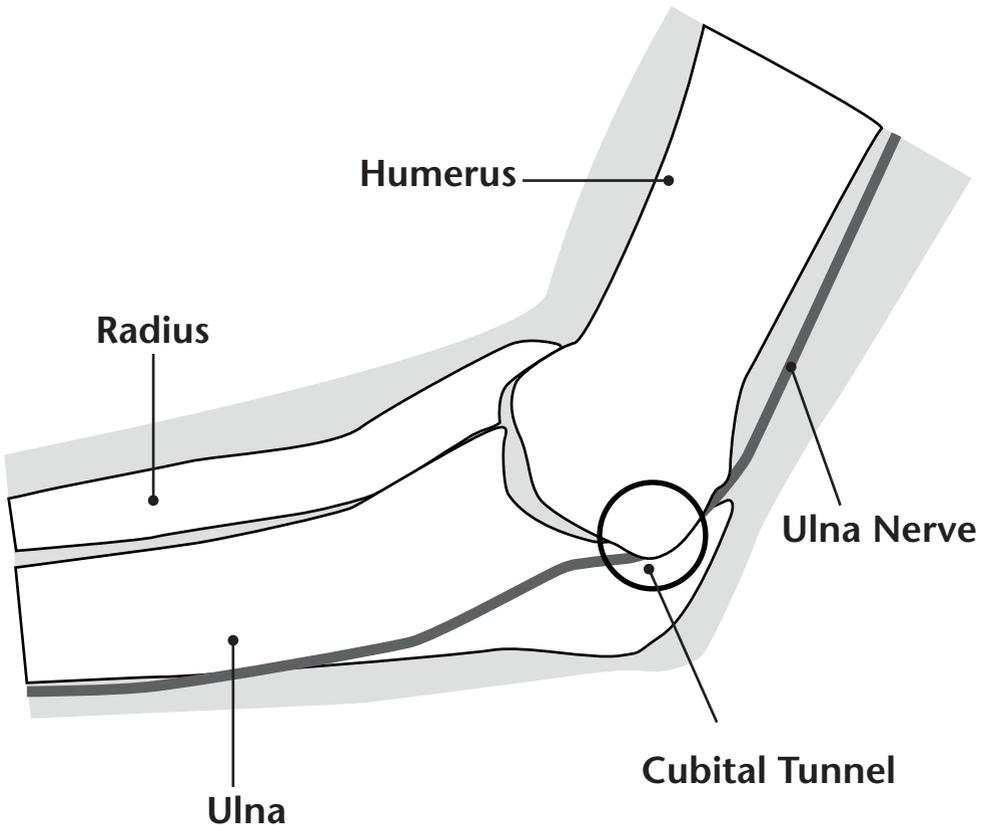


Advice after having **An Ulnar Nerve Decompression**



What is Cubital Tunnel Syndrome?

It is a problem which arises when a nerve in your arm is pressed. The nerve is called the ulnar nerve and it can be pressed as it passes through the cubital tunnel. The cubital tunnel is formed between a groove in the bone at the elbow and a tough layer of tissue that goes across it.

The ulnar nerve can be irritated by long periods of stretching for example over a bent elbow or by direct pressure for example leaning on a desk or arm of a chair. The nerve can also be damaged in an injury such as a direct blow or broken bone.

The ulnar nerve controls many small muscles in your hand and the feeling in your ring and little fingers. When it is pressed it can cause symptoms of pain, pins and needles and, or numbness in the hand.

Occasionally, some people need surgery; this surgery is called decompression. **This leaflet will give you some advice after having the decompression surgery.**

About the Surgery

The surgery is usually a day procedure which means you can go home on the same day as your surgery. Usually you will have this surgery done under a general anaesthetic. This means you will be asleep during your surgery.

The aim of the surgery is to reduce the pressure on the nerve by creating more space for the nerve. A cut is made at the inside of your elbow. We identify the nerve and release any tissue that is compressing it.

Please note that as with any surgery there are potential risks involved. The majority of people have a straight forward recovery following surgery. However complications can occur and include:

- Infection - If your wound is leaking, red or you have a temperature or are feeling unwell this may mean you have an infection. Please contact the hand clinic immediately (if out of hours please contact NHS 24 - Telephone 111).
- Scar discomfort may be a problem but generally resolves over time.

- The nerve may not fully recover so you may have some ongoing weakness or loss of feeling in the hand.
- Further nerve damage causing weakness, loss of movement (paralysis), or loss of feeling in the hand area.

What to expect after surgery

You will have a padded bandage on your arm and a bulky dressing. You can remove the bulky dressing after 48 hours but do not remove the padded bandage. We would advise you to rest and keep your hand raised for 2-3 days after your surgery. Your stitches will be removed 10-14 days after surgery.

You may experience pain and discomfort in the arm at first but normally this resolves with time. It is important to manage your pain to allow you to move and do your exercises. Please speak to your GP or pharmacist about controlling your pain if necessary.

Ice and elevation

You can put an ice or a cold pack on your elbow for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 2 hours for 3 - 5 days following your surgery or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth or plastic bag between the ice pack and your skin or wound so that it remains dry

How to care for your arm and hand

Remember to keep your dressing clean and do not soak your arm in water until your stitches have been removed and the wound is well healed. You may shower, but keep the bandage dry by covering it with plastic (bin bag or plastic bag).

Once your wound is completely closed and the stitches have been removed, begin massaging your scar and the surrounding area with moisturiser. Any non perfumed moisturiser is suitable. The massage will help to soften your scar, make it less sensitive and help with healing.

Exercise

Gently bend and straighten your elbow throughout the day to keep your arm flexible.

Moving and using your hand

You may begin to use your arm as pain allows, remember for the first couple of weeks you should avoid heavy lifting or pulling. Remember to keep your dressing clean and dry until your wound completely heals.

Driving

You can return to driving when it is comfortable to do so. You must feel that you are in complete control of the car; **it is your responsibility to check with your insurance company before returning to driving.**

Time off work

This will depend on your occupation and, or place of work. Most people can return to work within 1-4 weeks, whilst heavy manual workers may need at least 6 weeks

Contact Details:

Hospital: _____

Department: _____

 Number: _____