

Carpal tunnel release is the most common hand surgery performed in the United States. It is performed to relieve median nerve compression at the wrist (carpal tunnel syndrome).

The procedure may be performed by either an open incision across the palm or via an endoscopic approach and consists of transection of the transverse carpal ligament.

If there is significant loss of thumb opposition, then the palmaris longus tendon is transferred to the thumb at the same time.



The procedure may be performed under general anesthesia, local anesthesia, or via a Bier block. Blood loss is minimal. Most patients undergoing this procedure are healthy, but a significant number of patients with rheumatoid arthritis suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome. It is important to document all peripheral neuropathies and motor deficits prior to surgery so pre-existing conditions are not misconstrued as anesthetic complications.

*Jaffe RA, Samuels SI. Anesthesiologist's Manual of Surgical Procedures. 4th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2009: 925-927.*