



**NHS MEDICAL POLICY**

**Carpal and Cubital Tunnel Surgery  
Procedure 2018-003**

**A. Carpal tunnel release surgery may be indicated when ALL the following are present:**

1	The provider documented a diagnosis or high clinical suspicion of carpal tunnel syndrome.
2	<p>ONE or more of the following findings were documented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• age 50 or more</li> <li>• symptoms present 10 months or more</li> <li>• constant pain, sensory loss or paresthesia in median nerve distribution (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers)</li> <li>• physical examination with impaired two-point discrimination testing</li> <li>• physical examination with positive Phalen sign</li> <li>• electrodiagnostic testing confirms carpal tunnel syndrome with abnormal motor or sensory latency</li> </ul>
3	<p>ONE or more of the following non-operative treatments were tried:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activity modification</li> <li>• ergonomic adjustment</li> <li>• physical therapy</li> <li>• occupational therapy</li> <li>• pharmacotherapy (usually oral NSAID or corticosteroid)</li> <li>• wrist splinting</li> <li>• corticosteroid injection</li> </ul>
4	The patient is not pregnant or within 3 months of delivery.

**B. Cubital tunnel release surgery may be indicated when ALL the following are present:**

1	The provider documented a diagnosis or high clinical suspicion of cubital tunnel syndrome.
2	ONE or more of the following findings were documented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• age 50 or more</li><li>• symptoms present 10 months or more</li><li>• constant pain, sensory loss or paresthesia in ulnar nerve distribution (4<sup>th</sup> &amp; 5<sup>th</sup> fingers)</li><li>• physical examination with weakness of intrinsic hand muscles affecting pinch, grip, dexterity or ability to separate fingers</li><li>• physical examination with atrophy of hypothenar or interosseous hand muscles</li><li>• physical examination with clawing contracture of the 4<sup>th</sup> and/or 5<sup>th</sup> fingers</li><li>• physical examination with impaired two-point discrimination testing</li><li>• electrodiagnostic testing confirms cubital tunnel syndrome with abnormal motor or sensory latency</li></ul>
3	ONE or more of the following non-operative treatments were tried: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• activity modification</li><li>• ergonomic adjustment</li><li>• physical therapy</li><li>• occupational therapy</li><li>• pharmacotherapy (usually oral NSAID or corticosteroid)</li><li>• elbow splinting</li><li>• corticosteroid injection</li></ul>
4	The patient is not pregnant or within 2 months of delivery.

## SOURCES

1. Jablecki CK, Andary MT, Floeter MK, et al. Practice parameter: Electrodiagnostic studies in carpal tunnel syndrome. Report of the American Association of Electrodiagnostic Medicine, American Academy of Neurology, and the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. *Neurology* 2002; 58:1589.
2. Kaplan SJ, et al, Predictive factors in the non-surgical treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome, *J Hand Surg Br.* 1990;15(1):106.
3. Lew HL, Wang L, Robinson LR, Test-retest reliability of combined sensory index: implications for diagnosing carpal tunnel syndrome, *Muscle Nerve.* 2000 Aug;23(8):1261-4.
4. McClure P, et al, Evidence-based practice: an example related to the use of splinting in a patient with carpal tunnel syndrome, *Hand Ther.* 2003;16(3):256.
5. Stahl S, et al, Conservative therapy in carpal tunnel syndrome, *Harefuah.* 1996;130(4):241.
6. Wang L, Electrodiagnosis of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, *Phys Med Rehabil Clin N Am* 24 (2013) 67–77.
7. Witt JC, Hentz JG, Stevens JC. Carpal tunnel syndrome with normal nerve conduction studies. *Muscle Nerve* 2004; 29:515.
8. Yoon JS, et al, Ulnar Neuropathy With Normal Electrodiagnosis and Abnormal Nerve Ultrasound, *Arch Phys Med Rehabil.* 2010 Feb; 91(2): 318–320.
9. Milliman Care Guidelines, 24<sup>th</sup> edition, accessed Mar 3, 2020:
  - Cubital Tunnel Decompression Procedures (A-0392)
  - Carpal Tunnel Decompression Procedures: Open and Endoscopic (A-0211)
  - Musculoskeletal Surgery or Procedure GRG (SG-MS)
10. UpToDate.com was accessed May 15, 2018:
  - Carpal tunnel syndrome: Treatment and prognosis
  - Ulnar neuropathy at the elbow and wrist

## CODE REFERENCE (This may not be a comprehensive list of codes to apply to this policy.)

25020, 29848, 64721, 64718, 64719

## POLICY HISTORY/REVISION INFORMATION

Date	Action/Description
06/12/2019	Annual review – no changes
03/12/2020	Added line 4; under Sources line 9 added: 24 <sup>th</sup> edition, accessed March 3, 2020
03/12/2021	Annual review – no changes
03/28/2022	Annual review – no changes
02/22/2023	Annual review – no changes
02/20/2024	Annual review and approval by UM/QM Committee
03/24/2025	Annual review and approval by UM/QM Committee
03/24/2026	Annual review and approval by UM/QM Committee