

# Ultrasound therapy for pain following carpal tunnel surgery

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It's not uncommon for patients to experience soreness and hypersensitivity in their hands after having carpal tunnel surgery. Dr.

Janelle Van Otterloo, a Mayo Clinic physical therapist, says it's called pillar pain.

"What that is, is you have pain kind of deep under the incision and sometimes on the sides," says Dr. Van Otterloo.

Nerves are some of the slowest healers in the body. After carpal tunnel surgery to release pressure off of a nerve, that nerve can become irritated, and can cause hypersensitivity, redness and inflammation, says Dr. Van Otterloo.

While postoperative pain does not affect the outcome of carpal tunnel surgery, it can last up to nine months. However, ultrasound therapy can speed up the recovery process.

"There's a little crystal inside our transducer head of the ultrasound machine that pulsates over 20,000 pulses per second," says Dr. Van Otterloo. "That [high frequency](#) can help to break up [scar tissue](#) that has formed after your carpal [tunnel](#) surgery. The other thing it does is that it can help to increase circulation by heating. Those [sound waves](#) will convert to heat waves. And anytime a body area is warmed, it will bring extra circulation, which is extra oxygen and nutrients to the area."

Nerves typically improve after surgery at a rate of about one inch per month. When sensation returns, it happens gradually. Dr. Van Otterloo says most patients notice benefits after three to four ultrasound therapy sessions. In general, full recovery after [carpal tunnel syndrome](#) may take up to a year.

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