

## De Quervain's Tenosynovitis

### WHAT IS DE QUERVAIN'S TENOSYNOVITIS AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

De Quervain's tenosynovitis is a condition that affects two tendons that run from the back of the thumb down the side of the wrist. De Quervain's tenosynovitis happens when these tendons are swollen and irritated. Swelling of the tendons, and the tendon sheath (a tunnel-like structure that the tendons travel through at the wrist), can cause pain and tenderness along the thumb side of the wrist.

De Quervain's tenosynovitis may be caused by repetitive movement of the thumb and wrist and is common after pregnancy. Women are more commonly affected than men, in fact De Quervain's tenosynovitis is up to 8-10 times more common in women. People who are older than 40 years of age are almost 4 times as likely to develop De Quervain's tenosynovitis as people who are younger than 20 years of age.

When the tendons are swollen you may experience pain at the thumb side of the wrist that can travel up the forearm. The pain may appear either gradually or suddenly. The pain is usually worse when the hand and thumb are being used. Swelling may be seen over the thumb side of the wrist. Pain and swelling may make it difficult to move the thumb and wrist.



### Surgery

If symptoms don't settle, surgery may be an option, although this is not often needed. Surgery involves the surgeon inspecting the sheath surrounding the involved tendon or tendons, and then opening the sheath to release the pressure so that the tendons can glide freely. Recovery after surgery can take 4-6 months. Your hand therapist can refer you to a hand surgeon who can talk to you more about other treatment options.

### WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY REHABILITATION?

The initial treatment is to rest the wrist wearing a splint which stops the wrist and thumb from moving for a 4-6 week period. The splint is worn day and night and is only taken off to wash the hand. In some cases the area is also injected with a steroid as this is a strong anti-inflammatory and helps reduce the swelling and symptoms. If your De Quervain's tenosynovitis starts during pregnancy, symptoms are likely to end around the end of either pregnancy or breast-feeding.

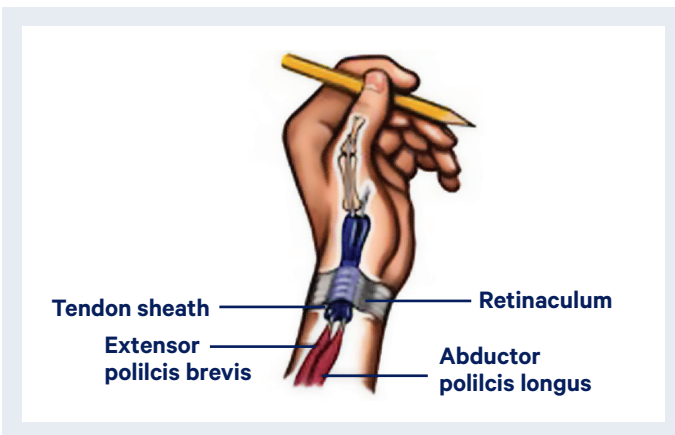
If the symptoms are longstanding (more than 3 months) or you have not got better with hand therapy, your hand therapist may refer you to a hand surgeon for a surgical opinion.

### Do

- Wear your splint.
- Avoid moving your wrist and thumb the same way repeatedly.
- Follow your hand therapists' instructions about exercises and using your hand.
- Avoid daily tasks that involve any strong gripping or lifting.

### Do Not

- Remove your splint without guidance from your hand therapist.



### HOW IS DE QUERVAIN'S TREATED?

#### Hand Therapy

Your hand therapist will assess your wrist and thumb and treatment may include

- A splint and changing how you use your hand in activities to rest the irritated tendons.
- Massage, ultrasound, anti-inflammatory medications to settle your swelling.
- A referral for a cortisone injection. The injection is done either under ultrasound guidance or by a hand surgeon.



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### WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

- Look out for activity that causes pain, swelling or numbness in your thumb and wrist, try to avoid it, and share that information with your hand therapist.
- Tell your hand therapist if your splint is too tight or uncomfortable, your splint becomes loose or if it is rubbing on your skin or if you have any numbness or pins and needles.
- If your wrist becomes red, swollen and painful you should stop your exercises and book an appointment to see your hand therapist. Elevation and ice may be helpful to reduce swelling.
- If things are getting worse book an appointment to see your hand therapist.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DO NOT HAVE TREATMENT?

In most cases pain and swelling will worsen with time and become much harder to treat. This will affect you in everyday tasks. Treatment is more effective if started within the first few months of you noticing your symptoms.

### CONTACT DETAILS AND REFERENCES

Your hand therapist is \_\_\_\_\_

Merivale Hand Clinic (03) 3559775

<http://www.pinnacle-ortho.com/de-quervains-syndrome> Image

<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00007> Information

Ilyas, A. M., Ast, M., Schaffer, A. A., & Thoder, J. (2007). De quervain tenosynovitis of the wrist. *Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons*, 15(12), 757-764.

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