Merivale Hand Clinic

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS - OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

HAND THERAPY

Swelling

WHAT IS SWELLING AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Swelling is caused by fluid gathering in the tissues of a body part or area. It can happen all over the body (generalised), or in one part of the body (localised). Swelling is considered one of the five characteristics of inflammation along with pain, heat, redness, and loss of function.

Hand swelling can happen from injuries such as broken bones, cuts or bruising, muscle, ligament and cartilage injuries or injuries from repetitive use of the hand. Other conditions can cause swelling in the hand for example infections, allergic reactions, ganglion cysts, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

HOW IS SWELLING TREATED?

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- /ƨYLJNŜăăλƨy of the wrist, hand or individual fingers with special garments or tapes. ¢his limits the space available for fluid to gather and encourages fluid out of the tissue.
- {øŜŜLJλy∃ massage λyűKŜ ŘλNŜŎűλƨyƨŦ èƨdzN KŜlŀNŰ to help to flush swelling away and improve circulation.
- DŜntle exerciseă that use muscle activity to gradually pump away extra fluid in the hand.
- ! ăplint to rest and protect the swollen hand¢
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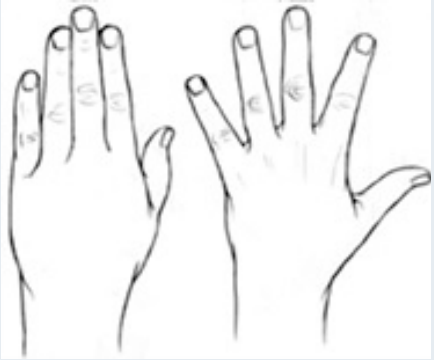
WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY REHABILITATION?

After an injury or surgery, inflammation and swelling generally peak at 3 days. Early management is aimed at controlling the amount of swelling. At first swelling is very fluid-like and can be easily moved. With time, if swelling continues it becomes thicker and stiffer, making it harder to manage. Your hand therapist will work with you after your injury to reduce your swelling. This can sometimes take up to three months or longer. If your hand swelling is not because of an injury or surgery your hand therapist can best discuss how to manage your swelling.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

- If your compression garment feels too tight or your fingers become cold, blotchy or numb it may be too tight and you will need to take it off. If this happens contact your hand therapist for a follow up appointment.
- Reactions to tapes, creams and splint. Stop using the product and tell your hand therapist at your next appointment.
- If your swelling is getting worse contact your hand therapist for a follow up appointment.



Exercise 1.

Spread and close your fingers as shown to create a pumping effect with the muscles inside your hand.

Exercise 2.

Bend just the small joints of your fingers to make a 'hook' then straighten up again.

This helps reduce swelling in the hand and helps stop your fingers getting stiff.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DO NOT HAVE TREATMENT?

Swelling is a normal response to injury, it is better not to leave it uncontrolled. Too much, or ongoing swelling can delay healing, cause stiffness and can limit the normal use of your hand.

CONTACT DETAILS AND REFERENCES

Your hand therapist is

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Merivale Hand Clinic (03) 3559775

https://www.healthinfo.org.nz