

THUMB BASAL JOINT PAIN

WHAT IS IT ?

Pain and/or weakness at the first thumb joint. There may also be stiffness, tenderness, swelling, clicking or catching

WHAT CAUSES IT ?

Arthritis or degenerative changes of the base of the thumb joint.

WHAT MAY I EXPECT ?

The pain in your thumb increases with activities such as pinching, gripping or writing and eases with rest. Symptoms usually come on gradually and may come and go depending on activity, weather, and amount of use.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF ?

- **Modify Your Activities** to be pain free; avoid forceful pinching activities.
- **Medication:** Speak to your health care provider about anti-inflammatory medication or consult the *Healthwise Handbook*. It may take 10-14 days for the medication to be fully effective.
- A **Splint** can be used if the pain is disabling. Use a *Short Thumb Spica* 1-3 weeks.
- Use **Ice or Heat** for 10-15 minutes, 3-6 times per day.
- **Thumb Exercises** (see back).
- Use **Adaptive Devices:** key holders, jar and can openers, spring-loaded scissors and clippers.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER?

If you have followed the advice of this handout for 6 weeks and experience no further improvement.

If you develop pain radiating into the upper arm or neck or numbness in your thumb or index finger.

EXERCISES

“C” thumb exercises - keep thumb tip and base curved like a “C” for all exercises

Start with **5** repetitions each and gradually increase to **20** repetitions.

1. Hold hand palm up and lift thumb out of palm,
hold 5 seconds.



2. Hold hand “pinkie” side down and lift thumb up.
hold 5 seconds.



3. Make circles with thumb, both directions.

