

DE QUERVAIN'S TENOSYNOVITIS

“Thumb Extensor Tendinitis”

WHAT IS IT?

Inflammation of the thumb extensor tendon that is accompanied by pain and swelling. The thumb extensor tendon crosses the wrist connecting forearm muscles to the thumb.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

Overuse, repetitive, forceful or unaccustomed movements of the thumb. Daily home/work activities using poor body mechanics or ergonomics can also contribute to this condition.

WHAT MAY I EXPECT?

Your thumb may feel much better after a period of rest but the problem will most likely return if you do not take steps to protect the muscle from further injury. De Quervain's tenosynovitis usually takes several weeks to months to fully heal.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

- **Modify Activities** to be pain-free. Do not continue to stress the tendon.
- **Apply Ice** for 10-15 minutes 3-6 times per day.
- Maintain “**Neutral**” wrist position – (See back) Minimize wrist bending activities.
- **Stretch/Exercise** - gentle stretching and exercises. (See back)
- **Circulation** can be improved by decreasing consumption of caffeine, nicotine and alcohol; and performing light aerobic exercise such as walking.
- A **Splint** can be used if the pain is disabling. A *thumb spica splint* (tip of thumb out) can help maintain the thumb and wrist in neutral. Keep it on only during activities that require joint support in order to prevent pain. Wear the splint as long as symptoms persist up to a maximum of 6 weeks.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER?

If you have consistently followed the advice of this handout for 6 weeks and experience no further improvement. If you develop pain radiating into the upper arm/neck or numbness in your thumb or index finger.

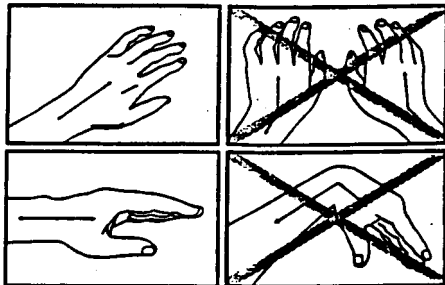
Thumb Pain: Activity Guidelines to Promote Healing

Use Good Posture – A slouching posture is more likely to place the wrists and elbows in a poor position for a task.



Knees about the same level as hips or lower.

Use Neutral Wrist Position – for typing or tool use.



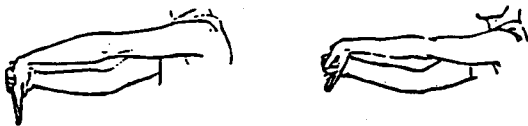
Correct Positions

Incorrect Positions

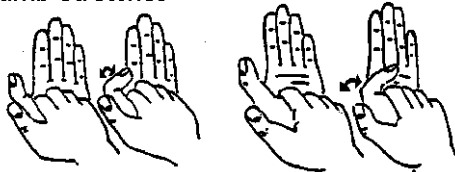
Stretch and Ice

3-4 times per day, Gentle pull - *not pain*.

Wrist stretches



Thumb Stretches



Strengthening Exercise (done in a painfree manner)

Towel Gathering



Isometric holds

Avoid Forceful Gripping

At Your Desk

- Modify your pen, mouse, or tools to make the grip soft, large and rough rather than small, hard and slippery. Use pen sleeves, grippers, foam sleeves from hair curlers, sponge material or cloth tape.
- When using a mouse, relax your hand and click gently or try a trackball or finger pointing device.

In Your Car

- Use a padded steering wheel cover.

Using Tools

- Use power tools instead of small hand tools.
- Place an extender on the tool.
- Avoid use of heavy vibrating tools.

Lifting Objects

- Use both hands and arms.
- Fill bags with less weight.

In Your Kitchen

- In the kitchen, scoot rather than lift heavy objects.
- Sharpen your knives.
- Hold pot handle with palm up to drain liquids.

Performing Personal Care

- Grasp hair brush, toothbrush lightly.
- Move slowly.
- Avoid wringing towel motion.