

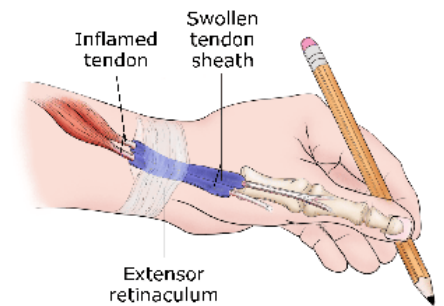
## De Quervain's syndrome

### What is De Quervain's syndrome?

It is a painful condition that affects tendons running through a tunnel on the thumb side of the wrist.

### What is the cause?

Its exact cause is not known. There is little evidence that it is caused by work activities, but any activity that requires repetitive hand and wrist movement such as hand use at work, at home, in the garden or at sport – can worsen it. Mothers of small babies seem particularly prone to it, but it is not known if this is due to hormonal changes after pregnancy or due to lifting the baby repeatedly.



### What are the symptoms?

- Pain on the thumb side of the wrist.
- Swelling near the base of the thumb along the side of the wrist.
- Pain and difficulty moving the thumb and wrist when doing something that involves holding or pinching
- Clicking or snapping of the tendons occur occasionally.

### Treatment:

**Rest:** Rest your painful thumb and wrist

**Apply cold:** In the early days of a painful thumb, you may apply either crushed ice or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel to the painful area. Apply for up to 20 minutes a few times a day.

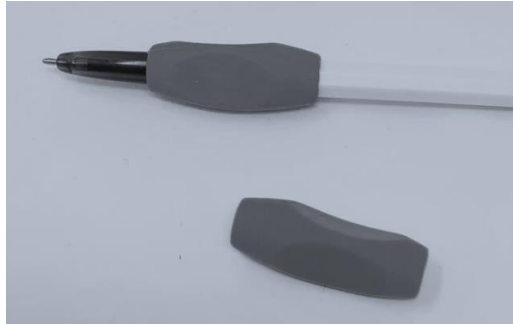
**Activity modification:** Avoid using your thumb and wrist for activities that cause pain or modify your activity. Your therapist can help you with suggestions on how to modify painful activities.

**Splint:** Your therapist may provide you with a splint to support your painful thumb and wrist. You must wear the splint as suggested by the therapist.



**Taping:** Your therapist may use a special type of tape to provide support for your painful thumb and wrist. The therapist will teach you how to apply the tape yourself if needed.

**Adaptive aids:** You may find some tasks easier using special equipment such as using a wide grip pen or knife or cutlery.



**Steroid injection:** A steroid injection in the painful area may help to reduce pain. The risks of injection are small, but it very occasionally causes some thinning or colour change in the skin at the site of injection.

**Exercises:** Your therapist will select exercises suitable for you depending on your pain levels. Only perform exercises as suggested by your therapist. If any of these exercises worsen your symptoms, please discuss with your therapist so that the exercise programme can be adjusted.

## 1. Wrist flexion and extension

Resting your elbow on a surface, relax your thumb and gently bend your wrist forwards and backwards as pain allows.



## 2. Wrist side-to-side movement

Rest your hand on a table and slide your wrist from one side to the other as shown in the picture below.



## 3. Thumb flexion

Resting your hand on a surface, support under your thumb as shown in the photo and gently bend your thumb as pain allows and relax the thumb.



## 4. Thumb 'O' to each finger

Touch your thumb tip to the first fingertip (index finger) making an 'O' shape. As pain allows make an 'O' with each of the other fingertips.



## 5. Muscle activation

Rest your hand on a table. Place an elastic band around all your fingers as shown in the picture. Gently pull your little finger away from the rest of your fingers against the resistance of the elastic band. Please make sure that your thumb and wrist stays relaxed throughout this exercise. Exercising the little finger indirectly exercises the muscles on its opposite side i.e., your painful thumb and wrist muscles.



**Once the pain has reduced your therapist may suggest further exercises.**

## 6. Combined stretch

Place your affected hand over the edge of table at the wrist level. Make a fist with thumb held inside and then gently tilt your wrist down towards the floor. Hold the stretch for a few seconds and then relax.



### 7. Sponge squeeze

Squeeze a light sponge between thumb and fingers.



### 8. Eccentric activation

Place an elastic band around your thumb as shown in the picture. Stretch the elastic band gently upwards adding light resistance to your thumb. Now gently bend your thumb against this resistance and then relax.



Repeat each exercise \_\_\_\_\_ times

\_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

#### Contact numbers:

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(08:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday)