

DeQuervain's Tenosynovitis

Information for Patients



This leaflet has been written to give you the right information about DeQuervain's tenosynovitis and what you can do to help with your recovery.

What is DeQuervain's tenosynovitis?

DeQuervain's tenosynovitis is not a dangerous issue. It normally relates to pain around the base of the thumb/wrist as a result of soft tissue irritation.

What causes DeQuervain's tenosynovitis?

Like with most aches and pains in most parts of the body, there are a number of things that might be making your thumb/wrist sore. This could include trauma (a fall or a sports injury), repetitive movements, or doing more or less activity than you're used to. Most thumb/wrist issues are due to soft tissue (muscles, ligaments and tendons) and despite it being uncomfortable, it is normally nothing to worry about.

What are the common symptoms?

Pain: Discomfort around the base of the thumb is the most common symptom of DeQuervain's tenosynovitis. It is normally aggravated by simple things like gripping, twisting or carrying things.

Swelling: In some cases, you may find that the area at the base of your thumb may be swollen.

Hand feeling weak: Pain is very good at getting in the way of things. With an uncomfortable thumb/ wrist it might be very difficult to do normal things like lifting a bag or a cup of tea.

What can I do to help myself?

Calm it down: Often the best place to start with any painful complaint is to try and calm it down. In a lot of cases there will be things your thumb/wrist likes to do and some things that it is less happy to do. Calming it down simply means looking at the things it doesn't like and trying to make some adjustments or changes to make it easier for yourself. For example, you might find that typing on a keyboard or lifting a saucepan off the hob are uncomfortable.

Taking more regular breaks or using the other hand to lift may be easy ways to help calm the issue down whilst your thumb/wrist is unhappy.

Pain control: Applying something warm or cold around your thumb may also be useful in helping with some of the pain (do remember to wrap your hot water bottle/cold pack in a towel before applying it to your skin to avoid burns).

Build it back up again: Movement is medicine for your body. Calming the issue down (as described above) is often the best place to start and sometimes this might take a few weeks to help. Once your thumb/wrist feels a little calmer, it is a good idea to start to 'build it back up again'. What this means is that once the thumb is able to tolerate some gentle exercise, then it is worth starting some.

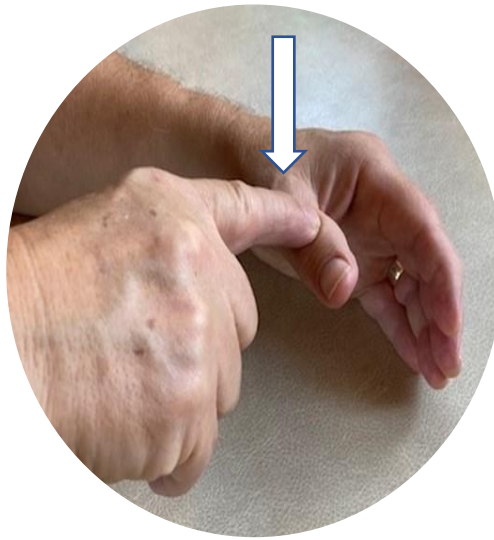
Will it get better?

For most people, thumb/wrist pain will not be a pleasant experience but reassuringly, it does have the potential to get better. It is difficult to predict how long, smooth or full your recovery might be, but by understanding the issue as best you can and by adjusting what is sore to then allow you to explore some exercise/s, is often the best formula for success.

If you would like to know more about DeQuervain's tenosynovitis or find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

Search online: [Norfolk and Waveney MSK services](#) 'DeQuervain's tenosynovitis'

Exercises



Using your non-problematic hand, gently push down on the back of the problem thumb. Try to keep the problematic thumb still. This should mean that you feel some effort, but your thumb doesn't move. Hold this position for 15-30 seconds and repeat 2-3 times.

You do not have to push hard.

Complete little and often throughout the day.



Using your non-problematic hand, gently push on the side of the problem thumb (as if pushing it towards your fingers). Try to keep the problematic thumb still. This should mean that you feel some effort, but your thumb doesn't move. Hold this position for 15-30 seconds and repeat 2-3 times.

You do not have to push hard.

Complete little and often throughout the day.



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