

De Quervain's Syndrome

De Quervain's is a non-harmful, painful condition that affects the tendons of the thumb as they run through a tunnel in the wrist.

Causes

Common causes of De Quervain's include:

- Repetitive use of the thumb and wrist
- A change in activity or load which puts extra strain through the thumb tendons
- A change in position or the way you use your thumb and wrist
- It is more common in women than in men

Symptoms

Common causes of De Quervain's include:

- Pain on the thumb side of the wrist
- Pain or tenderness when you press on the area of the pain
- There may or may not be swelling in the painful area
- Occasionally there can be clicking noises in the painful area

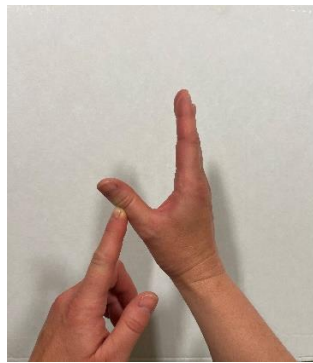
Treatment

- **Change the way you use your thumb and wrist, or avoid aggravating activities:** Such as changing the way you lift or hold things, changing the tool or the way you are doing an activity
- **Take pain relief:** You can try taking an anti-inflammatory pain medication like ibuprofen or pain relief such as paracetamol- please discuss medication with a GP or Pharmacist
- **Try using a thumb splint that holds the wrist and thumb in a supported position:** Use this for the painful activities but don't wear it all the time and there is no need to wear this at night
- **Apply ice or heat to the area:** use an ice pack wrapped in a damp towel or alternatively place a warm water bottle (in a cover) on the painful area. Use these regularly for up to 20 minutes each time. Do not use ice or heat if you have any loss of skin sensation or damage to your skin
- **Exercise your thumb and wrist:** you will find some suggestions at the end of this leaflet
- **Steroid injections may improve the pain:** A combination of a splint and injection is the most evidence-based treatment

Exercises

Improving the load tolerance through the thumb tendons can help the pain. Please try these exercises at home. These exercise diagrams have been created by Wibbi.

Web Wibbi.com



Resist two different thumb movements:

- a) Thumb up
- b) Thumb away from palm

You can resist these movements with your other finger and hold for 30 seconds x 3 daily.



Place an elastic band around your thumb and fingers. Pull the thumb upwards and then outwards/sideways against the elastic hold for 30 secs x 3.

If no pain with the above try this progression.

Pull up and down slowly against the elastic for 3 sets of 8 every other day.

- Build these exercises up gradually
- Pain levels of up to 4/10 that settles quickly after your exercises is acceptable
- Tendon related pain often benefits from increased rest periods and it is recommended that you have a least one day off between doing exercise to avoid aggravating symptoms
- If any of these exercises make your symptoms worse then reduce the frequency or stop them and consult your doctor. If after four to six weeks your wrist and thumb pain is not improving, go back and see your doctor

Contact us

East Berkshire: Windsor, Maidenhead, Slough, Ascot, Bracknell

Call 0300 365 5678

Email MSKphysioadmin@berkshire.nhs.uk

West Berkshire: Wokingham, Newbury, Reading

Call 0118 955 0415

Email admin.rdgphysio@berkshire.nhs.uk



www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/physiotherapy