
Thumb Pain

Introduction

Most thumb pain has a very simple cause and can settle with time. The pain may come from strained or inflamed soft tissues such as tendons and ligaments or the joints themselves. You can often manage this pain yourself with over-the-counter medication speak to your pharmacist (for advice).

A period of rest from activities that aggravate symptoms can help, however it is important to maintain gentle movements of the thumb to prevent stiffness. Gentle exercises such as the ones below, can help reduce pain and stiffness.

Should I see a Medical Professional?

Most cases of thumb pain will improve with time or self-help. However you may need to see your doctor or physiotherapist if you have tingling, numbness or weakness in your thumb or if your pain doesn't settle sufficiently.

You should attend A+E if you have injured your thumb, if it is misshapen, swollen, hot, red and severely painful.

What can I do to help ease my symptoms?

- Over-the-counter medication can help (speak to your pharmacist for advice)
- Ease up on aggravating activities and try to use your thumb in a different way for a period of time.
- Try and keep the thumb moving.
- Try the general exercises on this sheet.
- Don't worry most symptoms will improve over time.

[Video](#)



a) Elbow or back of your hand on a table.

Put your thumb against each fingertip in turn.

Repeat 10 times.

b) Practise picking up small objects.

[Video](#)



Hold all fingers straight.

Make a big circle with your thumb.

Repeat 10 times.

©Physiotools

[Video](#)



Support your elbow on a table with your wrist straight and your fingers pointing towards the ceiling.

Make a fist (thumb over fingers). Straighten your fingers and bring them apart.

Repeat 10 times.

©Physiotools

For further information

Please email ghnt.newcastlegatesheadtims@nhs.net, ring our Booking Office on **0191 4452643** or visit our website at: www.tims.nhs.uk which provides online guidance and support on managing your musculoskeletal (MSK) condition effectively.

The NHS website also provides trusted online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare to help you manage your condition and/or inform your choices about your health: www.nhs.uk.

Useful links

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can offer on-the-spot advice and information about the NHS. You can contact them on freephone **0800 032 02 02** or e-mail northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk.



Tyneside Integrated Musculoskeletal Service

TIMS is a partnership between Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

Information provided by **John Gowland and Linda Stevenson**, Senior Physiotherapists
Review Date: October 2021