



DeQuervain's Syndrome



©PhysioTools

Introduction

This leaflet describes De Quervain's syndrome and the symptoms it may cause. It will help you to understand the treatment available to reduce your symptoms.

What is De Quervain's syndrome?

This condition results in the sheath covering the tendons on the thumb side of the wrist becoming thickened and painful. The sheath normally acts as a tunnel that holds the tendons in place. This allows them to slide up and down freely when the wrist or thumb moves. When the sheath thickens, the tunnel becomes narrower and it is more difficult for the tendons to slide through. This can result in the tendons becoming inflamed and often results in pain when using the hand.

De Quervain's syndrome is most common in people between the ages of 30 and 55 years, although it can happen at any age.

Women are 6 times more likely to be affected than men, also increased in females who are breastfeeding. It is particularly prevalent in women who have a young baby. It is not known whether this is due to hormonal changes as a result of pregnancy and childbirth, or due to lifting and carrying or feeding the baby.

No causal links between De Quervains and occupational risk factor.

What are the symptoms?

Pain on the thumb side of the wrist, usually gradual onset

Pain is aggravated especially by lifting the thumb, as in the hitchhiker position or when using scissors, turning a door handle, turning a tap, texting, and gaming.

Tenderness if you press on the site of pain.

Swelling of the site of pain – compare it with same spot on the opposite wrist.

Clicking or snapping of the tendons occurs occasionally.

How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis is usually made based on the symptoms history and examination. Advanced imaging is not necessary.

What is the treatment?

De Quervain's syndrome is not harmful which means it is safe to continue to use the hand, however it can be a really painful nuisance. Milder cases recover over a few weeks without treatment. Most will improve over time but may take a long time.

Treatment options are to help reduce the pain:

Activity Modification

Avoiding activities that cause pain, if possible altering how you grip adapting how you do certain tasks.

Pain relief

Over-the-counter pain relief and/or anti-inflammatory medication and gels may help to control the symptoms. Ask your pharmacist or GP for advice



Splints.

There is not much evidence that wearing a thumb splint will give symptom relief. However, in clinical practice some patients find it beneficial. A thumb splint, which can often be obtained from a pharmacist. It is desirable that the splint is only worn as needed for certain tasks for short a period as possible. if a splint is worn too much it can have negative effects causing the thumb to get stiff and weak

©PhysioTools

Steroid injection relieves the pain in about 80% of cases after an injection. The risks of injection are small, but it very occasionally causes some thinning or colour change in the skin at the site of injection,

Surgical decompression of the tendon tunnel. If non-operative management has failed release of the 1st dorsal compartment may be indicated. The anaesthetic may be local (injected under the skin at the site of operation), regional (injected in the armpit to numb the entire arm) or a general anaesthetic. The surgeon widens the tendon tunnel so the tendons have more room to move without pain

For further information

Please email ghnt.newcastlegatesheadtims@nhs.net, ring on **0191 2138800** 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 **Julie Phillips**, Senior Physiotherapists
Review Date: February 2022
