

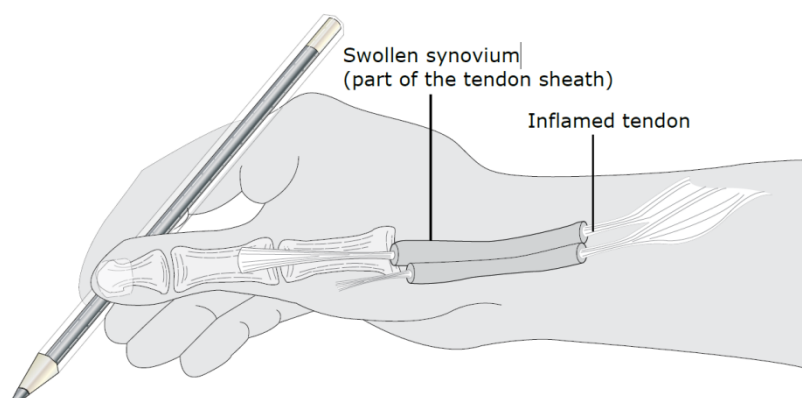
# De Quervain's Tenosynovitis

## Information for patients

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### What is De Quervain's tenosynovitis?

De Quervain's tenosynovitis or syndrome is a condition that affects the tendons where they run through a tunnel (tendon sheath) on the thumb side of the wrist.



### What causes it?

It appears without obvious cause in many cases. It is common in new mothers after pregnancy. It is not known if this is due to hormonal changes or repetitive lifting of the baby. There is little evidence that it is caused by work activities, but the pain can certainly be aggravated by repetitive hand activities at work, at home, in the garden, or during sport.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

- Pain and possibly swelling at the thumb side of the wrist
- It is often tender to touch at the thumb side of the wrist
- Pain on lifting your thumb up e.g. thumbs up
- Pain worse on activities such as pinching, grasping or wringing
- Some people experience clicking or snapping of tendons.

## What can you do to help?

De Quervain's tenosynovitis is not harmful but it can be a painful nuisance. Most cases will resolve without treatment but can take several months, some mild cases resolve in weeks.

To help the pain, you can try:

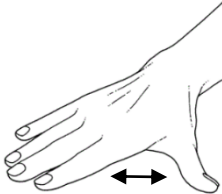
- **Rest** your thumb by adapting your activities and avoiding the activities that cause pain
- Some people get relief from wearing a **wrist splint** that covers both the wrist and thumb
- **Painkillers** are generally ineffective in treating De Quervain's tenosynovitis. However some people will get relief from using ice packs or anti-inflammatory medication
- **Physiotherapy** exercises (see below)
- **Steroid injections** can be effective in 70% of cases. If your symptoms do not settle then you can speak to your physiotherapist about this
- **Surgery** can be recommended if your pain persists despite trying all of the above options.



## Physiotherapy exercises

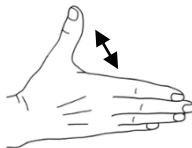
You may need to wear the splint continuously for 2-3 weeks before starting these exercises.

Try these exercises 2-3 times per day. If you experience a lasting increase in pain, please stop and speak to your physiotherapist.

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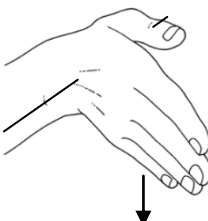
1. Place your hand flat on a table. Use your other hand to help slide your thumb along the table in and out.

Once you can do this without pain, try moving your thumb in and out on its own.

Repeat 5-10 times
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2. Place your hand on a table, thumb facing upwards. Use your other hand to lift your thumb upwards.

Once you can do this without pain, try moving your thumb up on its own.

Repeat 5-10 times
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3. Support your forearm on a table, with your wrist on the edge, thumb facing upwards.

Slowly lower your wrist downwards (little fingers leading). Use your other hand to help it back up to the start position.

Repeat 5-10 times

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