



## Trauma and Orthopaedics

# deQuervain's Tenosynovitis

### Introduction

deQuervain's Tenosynovitis is a condition where there is irritation or inflammation of the tendons at the base of the thumb. These tendons, which pass across the wrist, run in a sheath which is designed to allow lubrication and gliding with minimal friction. In deQuervain's disease the sheath becomes thickened, and the tendon no longer runs smoothly, they catch on the sheath and this may be painful.

### Who develops it?

- Problems often happen after prolonged repetitive activity which may irritate the tendons;
- New mothers are likely to develop this problem due to the positions adopted when caring for a baby;
- Hormone changes in pregnancy may also contribute to its occurrence.

### Symptoms

Pain and swelling over the thumb side of the wrist which may spread down the thumb or into the forearm. Pain is often worse with gripping and twisting movements.



## Patient Information

### Treatment

- Rest and splinting, to restrict activities
- Anti-inflammatory medication
- Physiotherapy
- Injection of a steroid and local anaesthetic to help reduce the inflammation and the swelling
- Surgery

### Surgery

Surgery is usually done as a day case under a general anaesthetic. The aim of surgery is to open-up the tendon sheath and allow the tendons to pass freely and comfortably. After the surgery, the hand will be heavily bandaged for the first few days. After this is removed you can exercise more freely to regain movement in the wrist, fingers and thumb. Stitches are removed in 10-14 days. This is usually done by making an appointment at your GP practice. You may need to take painkillers and some patients may be referred to physiotherapy if necessary. Your surgeon will advise you.

### How long will I be off work and when can I drive?

It is your responsibility to make sure you are safe to drive. You can discuss this further with your treating clinician if you remain unsure. Please consider bringing someone with you, to avoid having to drive home yourself immediately after any procedure. You may wish to consider waiting until you can grip the steering wheel tightly without any distracting pain, before resuming driving.

Returning to work will depend on your type of job – light manual or desk work may be possible at 2-3 weeks, whereas resumption of heavy manual work may only be possible after 4-6 weeks. You should be able to perform most everyday activities with any splints or strapping that may have been provided. Again, please speak to your treating clinician about this, and do not resume sporting activities until you are told that it is safe to do so.

## Patient Information

### Complications

A small number of patients may experience the following problems:

- Stiffness of the wrist, fingers or thumb;
- Swelling;
- Pain – sometimes due to the nearby nerve becoming irritated;
- Infection.

In the event of you experiencing any problems please do not hesitate to contact your surgeon's secretary, the Day Surgery Unit, or your GP.

### Further information

The day surgery unit can be contacted on 024 7696 6861 / 024 7696 6868 (University Hospital), or on 01788 663264 (Hospital of St. Cross). For further information please contact:

- Our plaster room technicians at Hospital of St. Cross on 01788 669143
- Our plaster room technicians at University Hospital Coventry on 024 7696 6909
- Our specialist hand surgery nurse / hand-coordinator on 024 7696 5072
- Hand Therapy at University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire on 024 7696 6016
- Hand Therapy at Hospital of St. Cross, Rugby on 01788 663257

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# Patient Information

**Document History**

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