

De Quervain's Syndrome

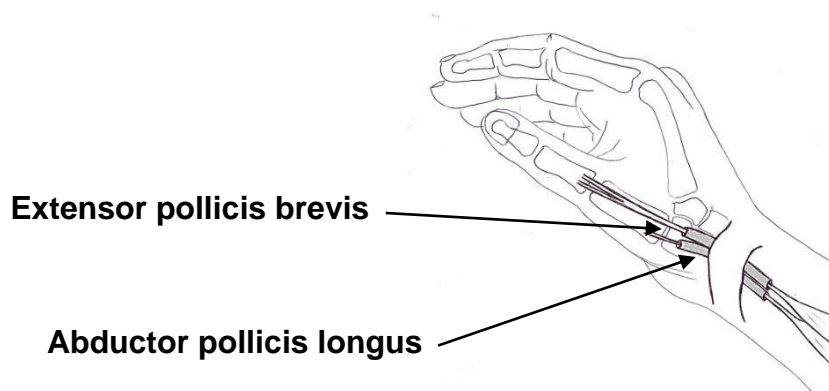
This leaflet gives information about de Quervain's syndrome. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your hand therapist on the contact number given at the end of this leaflet.

What is de Quervain's and why have I got it?

De Quervain's syndrome, de Quervain's tendinitis and de Quervain's tenosynovitis are terms used to describe a tendinosis of the sheath or tunnel that covers two tendons that help move the thumb. Tendinosis is a name given to tendons that show chronic changes and thickening, rather than an acute inflammation. De Quervain's syndrome is a set of symptoms that result from tendon degeneration, not from inflammation.

The two tendons involved are the tendons of the extensor pollicis brevis and abductor pollicis longus muscles of the thumb. These two muscles run side by side in their tunnel and both move the thumb away from the hand.

The cause of de Quervain's syndrome is not known, however it is much more common in women.



What are the signs and symptoms?

De Quervain's syndrome is characterised by pain and localised swelling at the base of thumb and the thumb side of the wrist. Pain is often worse with activities that involve gripping and squeezing combined with bending the wrist, such as when squeezing out a cloth or lifting up objects. This pain can spread into the thumb, up the arm and can be very limiting.

How can hand therapy help?

Hand therapy treatment for de Quervain's syndrome can help manage the symptoms, but there is no evidence that certain treatments work better than others. Your treatment programme will depend on your symptoms, their history and your

daily activities. Based on this, your therapist will suggest a range of treatments that may include the following:

Splints may help position and rest the thumb in order to help manage pain. Prolonged use of splints may not be indicated as this may cause further tendon damage. Your therapist will discuss with you how much to wear your splint and what type of splint will work best for you.

Repeated or continuous movements may aggravate your symptoms but it is important to keep your wrist and thumb moving to prevent stiffness. Your therapist will devise an exercise programme for you to help improve tendon glide and integrity and to maintain or improve movement.

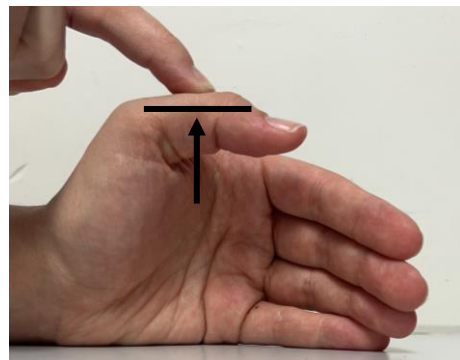
Your therapist may demonstrate to you how you can help improve your tendon's health with friction massage and other techniques to help improve the quality of the muscle tissue in your forearm. These are techniques you can complete yourself at home.

Isometric thumb exercises

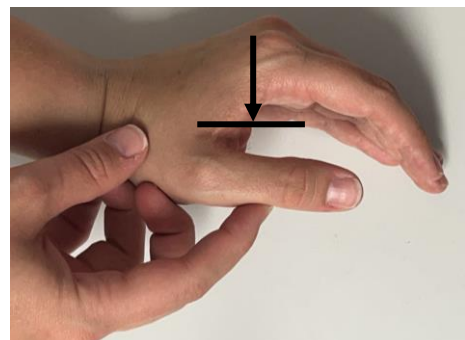
The following exercises should be done within pain limits as advised by your treating therapist. Please complete each exercise _____ times and hold for _____ seconds each time. Repeat _____ times per day.

Place your affected arm on a table with your hand in mid-position (little finger resting on the table and thumb on top)

1. Bend the tip of the affected thumb. Place your index finger from your unaffected hand on top of your thumb. Try to move your thumb up, away from the table (in a vertical line). Use your opposite hand's index finger to resist the movement.



2. Bend the tip of your thumb. Place your index finger from your unaffected hand on the outside edge of your thumb. Try to move your thumb out, away from the index finger (in a horizontal line). Use your opposite hand's index finger to resist the movement.



Your therapist will write any specific instructions in the box below:

Splint:

Massage:

Other Instructions:

Are there any alternative treatments?

In some cases, people with de Quervain's syndrome will need to be referred to a specialist for a cortisone injection. In other cases, surgery may be required. Your hand therapist can discuss this with you further if necessary.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the information provided in this leaflet, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment. For more urgent queries the team can be contact in the **treatment enquiries** telephone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is:

Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038
(answering machine only)

Appointments: 020 8725 0007



For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

Reference: THE_DEQ_04 **Published:** May 2023 **Review date:** May 2025

