

# DeQuervain's stenosing tenosynovitis – inflammation of the tendons of the thumb

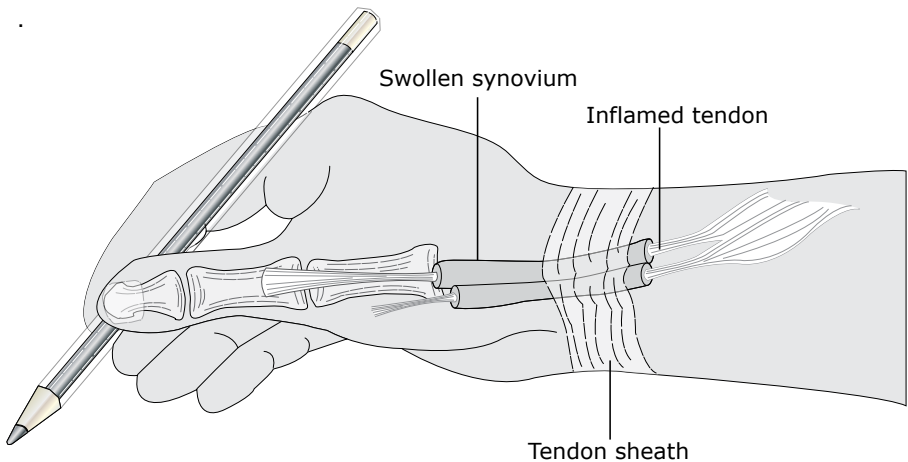
Information for patients

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of squares in two shades of gray, arranged in a pattern that resembles a staircase or a series of steps. The squares are arranged in a 4x4 grid, with the top-right square missing. The squares alternate between dark and light gray in a checkerboard pattern, starting with a dark square in the top-left corner.

DeQuervain's tenosynovitis is inflammation of the sheath (the synovium) that surrounds the two tendons that are involved in moving the thumb. The tendons run between the wrist and the thumb. There is obvious swelling and thickening of the sheath and it becomes very painful to move the thumb.

## The cause of tenosynovitis

In many cases the cause is unknown. It is more common in women, particularly after pregnancy. Overuse of the tendon, particularly repetitive movements used at work or in a sport, are likely to make the pain and inflammation worse.



## What are the symptoms?

The main symptoms are pain and swelling near the base of the thumb. Movements involving the thumb and wrist such as pinching, grasping or wringing, make the pain worse.

## How is the condition diagnosed?

Finkelstein's test is a simple test to diagnose De Quervain's. It can be performed by placing the thumb on the palm of the hand and making a fist around it, then bend your wrist towards your little finger (see picture). If this makes the pain by the base of your thumb worse, the test is considered positive.



## What is the treatment?

Treatment may include:

- **Rest** – it is important to limit the aggravating movements to reduce pain and allow time for the symptoms to settle.
- **Anti-inflammatory painkillers and gels** (e.g. ibuprofen) can reduce pain and inflammation.
- **An injection of steroid** into the sheath may help to relieve the problem.
- **Physiotherapy** treatment can help to stretch and strengthen the affected area. Exercises to do at home can help to reduce pain and increase function. Other treatments such as electrotherapy can also be given if appropriate.
- **Surgery** – if the pain persists despite trying the above treatments, the condition may be helped by a surgical release of the sheath.

## Exercises that can be used to help the condition



- Put the back of your hand on a table.
- Bring your thumb to the base of your little finger, and then relax back to neutral.
- Repeat 10 times.

- Support your forearm on a table with your wrist over the edge and palm of your hand facing down.
- Let your hand drop down. Gently assist the movement with your other hand. Hold for 20 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.





- Support your forearm on a table. Keeping your elbow straight, gently extend the wrist until you feel a stretch inside the forearm.
- Assist the movement with the other hand and hold for 20 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.

- Support your forearm on a table with the palm of your hand facing up. Holding a small weight in your hand, bend your wrist towards your body and lower down.
- Repeat 10 times.



- Support your forearm on a table with the palm of your hand facing down. Holding a small weight in your hand, extend your wrist towards your body and lower down.
- Repeat 10 times.



- Support your forearm on a table with the palm of your hand facing to the side. Holding a small weight in your hand, bend your wrist towards your thumb, and then relax.
- Repeat 10 times.

- Put an elastic band around your fingers and thumb.
- Gently move your thumb against the resistance of the band.
- Repeat 10 times.



