

# De Quervain's Tendonitis



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

De Quervain's tendonitis is an inflammation of the wrist tendons at the base of thumb. It is also known as **first dorsal compartment tendonitis**. The inflammation causes the tunnel around the tendons to swell, so thumb and wrist movements become painful. Holding objects, making a fist, or grabbing things with the hand cause pain.

This condition often happens because of new, repeated activities using the hand. Because of changes in hormones during pregnancy and nursing and handling the new baby, new mothers are often at risk for this tendonitis. People who have had wrist fractures may also be at risk.

## Signs

You may have one or more of these signs:

- Pain at the wrist on the thumb side that may go down the thumb or up into the lower arm
- Grabbing, pinching, or twisting motions of the hand increase pain
- Swelling at the base of the thumb
- Numbness on the back of the thumb and index finger

## Testing

Your doctor will ask about your health history and check your hand. You may be asked to make a fist, wrapping your fingers over your thumb. Then you will need to bend your wrist towards your little finger. This will cause pain if you have this type of tendonitis.

## Treatment

Treatment is done to ease the pain and inflammation of the tendons. You may need to:

- Wear a splint to limit movement of the thumb and wrist
- Take anti-inflammatory medicine
- Change your activities to decrease painful hand movements
- Have steroid medicine injected into the tendon compartment
- Have surgery to open the compartment to give the tendons more space if signs do not improve with other treatments

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.