

# Wrist tendonitis (De Quervain's tenosynovitis)

---

**De Quervain's tenosynovitis is a problem with tendons around the thumb side of your wrist. Tendons attach muscles to bone. Overuse and stretching the muscles may have an effect on the tendon.**

## How common is it?

De Quervain's occurs most often between 30 and 50 years of age, and is 10 times more common in women.

It can be due to trauma, overuse or inflammation, but often the cause is unknown.

## What are the symptoms?

The main symptom is pain over the thumb side of the wrist. It may develop suddenly or gradually.

It is worse with use of the hand and thumb, especially grasping, pinching and twisting.

There may be swelling at the thumb side of the wrist and 'creaking' or 'snapping' when the thumb is moved.

Due to pain and swelling, movement of the thumb may be less.

## What tests may be done?

If you see a healthcare professional they will ask you questions and carry out a clinical examination to help establish the cause of your problem.

## What are my treatment options?

Treatment options include:

- The first treatment is to rest the wrist. Try wearing a splint for 10 to 14 days. After this time, try stretching your wrist by doing some wrist exercises. You can find some [simple exercise to get you started](#) in the Musculoskeletal (MSK) Zone on NHS inform.
- Painkillers may help to ease the pain.
- Physiotherapy can help with reducing pain, increasing movement and strength in your wrist and thumb.
- In some cases the area is also injected with a steroid by your physiotherapist or doctor. Steroid is a strong anti-inflammatory and helps reduce the swelling. This usually takes 3 to 4 weeks to be effective. 50 to 70 % of patients are helped with an injection.

You can find more [information about treating muscle, bone and joint problems](#) in the NHS inform MSK Zone.

## Surgical treatment

De Quervain's tenosynovitis is a condition that gets better on its own, but it may take several weeks or months to settle.

You may be offered surgery, usually as a day case.

---

## Further information

If you have a muscle, bone or joint problem, visit the [MSK Zone](#) on NHS inform for self-management advice and exercises to get you moving normally, and safely.