



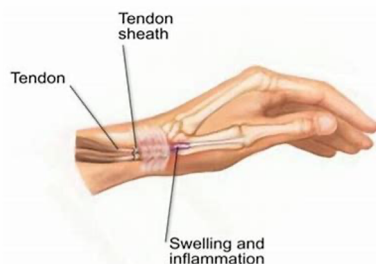
What is de Quervain's tendonitis?

It is condition brought on by irritation or inflammation of two tendons as they travel through a very narrow tunnel at the base of the thumb. The inflammation causes the tunnel or sheath around the tendons to swell and enlarge, making thumb and wrist movements painful. It is often precipitated by taking up a new, repetitive activity. New mothers are especially prone to this type of tendonitis as caring for an infant often creates awkward hand positioning. Wrist fractures can also increase irritation of these tendons as they pass through the tunnel.



What are the symptoms of de Quervain's tendonitis?

Pain over the thumb-side of the wrist is the main symptom. The pain may appear either gradually or suddenly and may radiate down the thumb or up the forearm. Hand and thumb motion increases pain, especially with forceful grasping or twisting. Swelling over the base of the thumb is common. There may be an occasional "catching" or "snapping" when moving the thumb. Palpation in the region shown is very tender and your doctor may order an ultrasound.



How is it treated?

The goal is to relieve the pain caused by the irritation and swelling. Non-surgical treatments include resting the thumb and wrist by wearing a plastic splint, taking oral anti-inflammatory medications or injecting a cortisone type of steroid into the tendon compartment. Each of these treatments help reduce the swelling, which typically relieves pain over time. In some cases, simply stopping the aggravating activities may allow the symptoms to go away on their own. When symptoms are severe or do not improve, surgery may be recommended. The surgery opens the compartment to make more room for the inflamed tendons and is performed as a day procedure. Normal use of the hand can usually be resumed once comfort and strength have returned.