

Wrist, hand and finger pain

Occupational Health



The prevention of infection is a priority in all healthcare settings and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, a cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or an unexplained rash which could be infectious please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility. If your visit is essential then phone ahead to the department that you are visiting
- If you are unwell seek advice from 111 or your GP if required
- Help us to keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.



Care Colleagues
Collaboration Communities

Wrist, hand and finger pain

Wrist, hand and finger pain is very common. Although pain in each of these areas can be very uncomfortable it is rarely serious. For many people pain will normally resolve within six to 12 weeks without any treatment.

Common causes

A number of factors have been associated with wrist, hand and finger pain. These include:

- A sprain / strain or a fall onto your wrist or hand
- A sudden increase or decrease in your normal activity or exercise levels
- Muscle weakness
- Nerve irritation – pain travelling from the neck into the hand
- Carpel tunnel syndrome – nerve pain affecting the hand
- De quervain's tenosynovitis – pain and swelling in the tendons of the thumb
- Following a period of increased stress, worry or low mood
- Following a period of poor sleep, fatigue or feeling run down
- Other lifestyle factors such as being overweight and smoking
- A flare up of longstanding wrist, hand or finger pain
- Other conditions

Common symptoms

These include:

- Pain in the wrist, hand or fingers
- Stiffness
- Reduced grip strength
- Swelling
- Misshapen finger joints
- Tingling and or numbness in the hand, fingers and or thumb
- Difficulty straightening your finger or thumb

You may experience constant or intermittent (comes and goes) symptoms that are aggravated by certain activities and reduced by others.

What can I do to help it?

- In the first few days after an onset of pain, changing or reducing your usual activities may help. However, there is strong evidence that keeping active and gradually returning to all your usual activities and exercise will help you recover
- It is normal to experience some pain during your recovery, but it does not mean you are damaging your wrist, hand or fingers
- Try to stay at work or return as soon as you are able. Your employer, GP or health practitioner will be able to advise on how to return to your normal work duties
- Try some of these self-help tips to aid your recovery:
- Apply a heat or icepack to the painful area – for up to 15 minutes. Never apply heat or ice directly to the skin
- A short course of simple pain medication as advised by your pharmacist or GP may help reduce pain and allow you to move more comfortably
- Keep moving. Regular movement and exercise is safe and helpful for your pain. It is important to build up gradually – the exercise or activity you enjoy most, is likely to help your recovery
- Good sleep habits and managing stress may help you cope better with your pain

Facts about wrist, hand and finger pain

- Wrist, hand and finger pain is common without any damage to the joints
- X-rays and scans often do not show the cause of your pain
- Movement and exercise is not harmful for the wrist, hand or fingers
- Your wrist, hand and fingers can become stronger and healthier with regular movement and exercise
- Improving your sleep and general health is all also important for your pain

When should i seek medical advice?

Call your GP surgery if

- Your pain is getting worse
- You have tried the self-help tips for three to four weeks and the symptoms have not improved
- You are suddenly unable to straighten your finger or thumb
- You have pain, tingling and numbness in one or both hands that is waking you at night and/or affecting your grip
- You have pain and morning stiffness in your fingers and/or wrists which takes more than 30 minutes to settle

Seek immediate medical advice if

- After a fall or injury
 - Your wrist, hand or fingers are misshapen
 - You are unable to move your wrist, hand or fingers
- You have a sudden loss of power and/or feeling in one or both arms and/or hands
- Your wrist or fingers are hot, red, swollen and painful

Do I need an X-ray or scan?

- X-rays or scans are not usually required to diagnose wrist, hand or finger pain
- X-rays or scans are not able to tell us how much pain you are experiencing
- X-rays and scans often show joint narrowing and osteoarthritis which are common in people without wrist, hand or finger pain. These findings are unlikely to change the way you manage your pain
- X-rays and scans are best used where a serious injury (for example a broken bone) or conditions such as cancer or infection are suspected

Why exercise?

It is important to get the wrist / hand moving early in order to gain mobility, strength and return to normal function. Early exercise can have a positive influence on tissue healing and reduce the potential for joint and soft tissue stiffness.

Wrist / hand exercises

These are suggested exercises and are to be performed within comfortable limits. If you have any concerns about any of the exercises, please seek medical advice.

1. Forearms and hands supported on a table, make a fist and then stretch out the fingers. Repeat these 10 to 15 times, three times per day.



2. Forearm support on a table with the hand resting over the edge of the table. Lift the hand up as far as you can then control it back down again. Use the other hand to help if necessary and ensure you work to the end of your available range of movement. Repeat 10 times, three times per day.



3. Rest your forearm on a table, palm facing down. Keeping your shoulders and upper body still roll the forearm over and turn the palm upward as far as you can. Turn the palm down again and repeat the movement 10 times, three times per day.



4. Press the pad of the thumb and index finger together, squeeze and hold for the count of five second. Ensure you keep the other fingers apart whilst doing the exercise. Repeat this for each finger pressing it against the thumb four times, two times per day.



5. Make a fist with the thumb over the fingers and squeeze, hold for five seconds. Repeat five times, three times per day.



6. Place the tip of the thumb and index finger together. Trace a line with the thumb from the tip of the finger to its base. Repeat five times. Do this with each finger in turn and repeat three times a day.



7. Stand beside a table with the palms down on the table. Keeping the elbows straight gently lean onto the hands transferring some weight through the palms onto the table. Maintain this for three or four seconds and recover. Repeat five times, two times per day.



Gradually

- Return to your normal activities
- Resume hobbies and sports

If you are unsure of when to progress your exercises, or you have any concerns about your injury please use the Phio self-referral platform or scan the QR code below.



Do I need a fit note?

If you're off work sick for **seven days or less**, your employer will normally ask you to complete a self-certificate for sick leave as soon as you return to work.

If you're off work sick for **more than seven days** your employer will normally ask for a fit note (or statement of fitness for work) from your GP or hospital doctor.

You can read more information here <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/caring-carers-and-long-term-conditions/when-do-i-need-a-fit-note/>

Useful websites and resources:

British Society for Surgery of the Hand:

<https://www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/default.aspx>

What should you know about joint health? – body logic – treating arthritis

<https://bodylogic.physio/what-should-you-know-about-joint-health/>

Accessing information and support to make healthy lifestyle choices

Online support:

- Exercise
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/?tabname=exercise-tips>
<https://www.nhs.uk>conditions>nhs-fitness-studio>
- Sleep
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/>
- Diet
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/>
- Emotional well being
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。