

Gordon N. Cromwell Jr. MD
Orthopedics
2600 Cherry Ave., Suite 202
Bremerton, WA 98310

Peninsula

(360) 479-23260

deQuervain's Tendinitis

deQuervain's' tendinitis is an inflammation of tissue on the thumb side of the wrist. It is a condition brought on by irritation or swelling of the tendons found in this area of the wrist. The irritation causes the compartment lining around the tendon to swell, changing the shape of the compartment. This makes it difficult for the tendons to move as they should.

This swelling can cause pain and tenderness. The pain over this region is the main symptom. The pain may appear either gradually or suddenly. It is felt in the wrist and can travel up the forearm. Irritation of the nerve lying on top of the tendon sheath may cause numbness on the back of the thumb and index finger, usually noticed when forming a fist, grasping or gripping things, or turning the wrist. The thumb may also catch when you bend it. There may be an area that is tender to the touch or you may feel a small knot.

A Finkelstein test is generally performed to help make a diagnosis. In this test, the patient makes a fist with the fingers over the thumb. The wrist is then bent in the direction of the little finger. This test can be quite painful for the person with deQuervain's tendinitis. Tenderness directly over the tendons on the thumb side of the wrist is the most common finding, however.

The treatment goal is to relieve the pain caused by the irritation and swelling. In some cases, a splint will be recommended to rest the thumb and wrist. Anti-inflammatory medication taken by mouth or injected into that tendon compartment may help reduce the swelling and relieve the pain. Restriction of activities alone may be enough to reduce the swelling and symptoms.

When symptoms are severe or do not improve with conservative treatments, surgery may be needed. The surgery opens the tendon compartment covering to make more room for the irritated tendons. This is an out-patient surgery and can be done with a local or general anesthetic.