



## Treating and avoiding hand and wrist pain

Did you know that hand and wrist pain are the most common muscle and joint complaints made to doctors? Pain, fatigue and hand and wrist injury are frequent problems for many because most people spend a large portion of their days using their hands.

### Common hand and wrist problems

A number of common problems cause pain in our hands and wrists. For example, using a certain part of your body to do the same action over and over can result in repetitive stress injuries. Clerks, carpenters, musicians, mail-delivery personnel and athletes can often develop repetitive stress injuries in their hands and wrists.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is another well-known condition that results in hand and wrist pain. Carpal tunnels are the passageways inside your wrists for the nerves and tendons that bend your fingers. These can become compressed and painful as a result of repetitive tasks—you may have seen people wearing wrist braces at work for exactly this problem.

Old sprains and injuries can also come back to haunt us. Conditions like arthritis, for example, can develop at the site of old injuries—thumb arthritis is common and painful. Osteoarthritis, which is another specific form of joint injury, can also affect the fingers.

Ganglion cysts—bumps or swollen tissue that usually form around tendons—are another source of hand and wrist pain.

### Who gets hand or wrist pain?

Anyone can get pain in their hands or wrists or both. These pains are possible whether you're active, inactive or somewhere in between. Those doing repetitive work like typing, cutting hair, chopping vegetables or working behind a cash register are more susceptible.

While older people are more likely to have osteoarthritis that bothers their wrists, thumbs and fingers, younger people can also develop it through sports injuries or falls.

### Prevention

Here are some strategies for preventing hand and wrist injury:

- Arrange your workstation or workspace ergonomically. Make sure your desk and keyboard are set up correctly so that your shoulders, elbows, wrists and hands are in comfortable positions.
- Take regular breaks and stretch your shoulders, neck, wrists and fingers.
- Do morning and afternoon exercises for your wrists and hands throughout the workday.
- Avoid falls and wear wrist guards for rollerblading and snowboarding. Falling on your hands can cause wrist injury and future problems.

Being aware of the potential for injury is a good way of protecting against it. Listen to your body—and don't forget to stretch your back, neck and shoulders regularly each day.

### Treating existing pain

If you have existing pain that lasts more than a few days or worsens progressively, visit your doctor. Catching a problem before it becomes chronic can help you minimize the damage. Physiotherapy or the use of a splint can sometimes help with repetitive strain injuries. But be sure to see your doctor or physiotherapist first to determine the best option for you.

### Learn more

#### [Exercising Your Hands and Wrists @ Your Desk](#)

A five-minute hand and wrist exercise video that can help prevent future pain.

#### [Slide Show: Hand Exercises for People with Arthritis](#)

A slide show of hand exercises for those suffering from arthritis.

#### [Hand Exercise](#)

Preventative hand and wrist exercises for your workday.

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