



### **Impression/Diagnosis:** de Quervain's syndrome

#### **What does this mean?**

de Quervain's syndrome describes a painful restriction of two of the tendons that attach muscles to your thumb. These tendons can usually slide smoothly through ligament sheaths which hold them in place. When you have de Quervain's syndrome there is a thickening of these ligaments causing resistance.

#### **Why does this happen?**

This usually occurs as an overuse injury where there is repetitive use of the thumb.

#### **What is the treatment?**

The main aim of treatment is to allow the tendons to settle down again and stop being painful. The most effective way to achieve this is by following the right activity modification advice. After a period of rest the tendons normally start moving smoothly again.

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### **Activity Modification**

Usually there will be one or two activities that you know will cause more pain in your thumb. As much as possible, try to rest from these.

There are more specific movements of your thumb that you should try to avoid.



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#### Carrying Advice

Avoid holding things in a way in which your thumb is pointing downwards. When your thumb is pointing down in this way the effected tendons are being stretched which puts them under more strain.

Carrying with your thumb pointing upwards removes the stretch in these tendons and allows them to work in a position that they are particularly strong in.

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### Avoid Thumb Flexion

Try to avoid moving your thumb across your hand as shown as this stretches the effected tendons and puts them under more strain.

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Additionally try to avoid repetitive thumb or wrist movements and holding things using your thumb for long times.

If you are in doubt remember to avoid painful movements with your hand as much as possible.



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There are other options that you should try to help relieve your symptoms.

### Thumb Splint

This will assist in preventing unhelpful movements as described above.

This can usually be provided by your physiotherapist.

If this is not possible or you require a replacement they can be found by searching for a "SPICA splint" online.

### Anti-inflammatory medications

These can help the tendons settle again.

For some people taking anti-inflammatory medications can be unsafe, usually as they can interfere with other medications. If you have any doubts whether you should take them please contact your GP.

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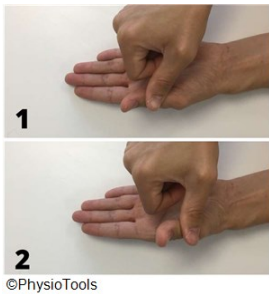
### **Exercises for when your pain has settled:**

Exercises are not able to cure the problem in your thumb, however it is a good idea to complete them after your pain has settled in order to strengthen the involved muscles again and prevent the problem re-occurring.

Try to repeat either the first two (no band), or last two (with the finger strengthener band) once a day for a period of 2 months.

Stop the exercises if they become painful.

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### Resisted Thumb Abduction

Rest your hand on a table with the palm facing upwards and your thumb in a neutral position.

Move your thumb up towards your body.

Resist the movement with your other hand so that you complete it slowly.

Return your thumb to a neutral position and then repeat.

Repeat approximately 10 repetitions, or until fatigue.



### Resisted Thumb Extension

Start with your hand on a table, palm facing downwards, thumb in a neutral position.

Slide your thumb out to the side along the table, whilst resisting with your other hand so that you complete the movement slowly.

Return your hand to a neutral position and repeat.

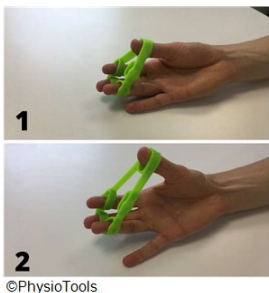
Repeat approximately 10 repetitions or until fatigue.

When these first two exercises are feeling easy to complete move on to using a band as shown below.

Move on to completing the exercises against a resistance band.

You can use standard elastic bands however specific finger strengthener bands are preferable.

We are not able to provide these ourselves however they are inexpensive and can be found online by searching "finger strengthening band".



### Thumb Abduction With Finger Strengthener

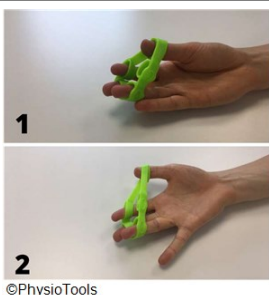
Place all your fingers (except the little one which will be too weak to be involved!) into the loops of the band, and place your thumb in the larger loop for the thumb.

Start with your hand on a table with palm facing up and thumb relaxed.

Try to pull your thumb up towards your body as much as you can whilst holding the band in place with your fingers.

Hold the tension for 5 seconds and then return to the resting position.

Repeat 10 repetitions, rest for a few minutes and then return and complete another 10 repetitions.



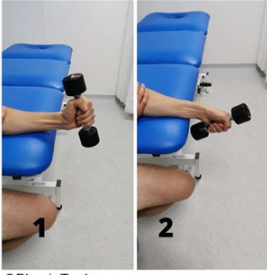
### Thumb Extension With Finger Strengthener

Start with your hand on a table, palm facing up.

Try to pull your thumb out to the side as much as possible, whilst maintaining the same position of your fingers.

Hold the tension for 5 seconds and then relax again.

Repeat 10 repetitions, rest for a few minutes and then complete another 10.



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## Radial/Ulnar Deviation

Holding a heavy object with your wrist hanging over the edge of a table.  
Have your thumb facing up towards the ceiling.  
Slowly lower your wrist as if you are pointing your thumb towards the floor.  
Slowly return to the starting position.  
Start with a lower weight and gradually progress to heavier weights.

Complete 2 sets of 10 repetitions.

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