

Diseases, Disorders and Injuries

De Quervain's Disease

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What is De Quervain's disease?

De Quervain's disease (or De Quervain's tenosynovitis) is a term used to describe a painful disorder affecting the tendons at the base of the thumb. While the exact cause is not known, this disease is one of the most common kinds of tendon lining inflammatory diseases.

De Quervain's disease is more likely to occur in women than men between the ages of 30 and 50 years, but anyone at any age can be diagnosed with this disease. Pregnant women or people with diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis are more likely to get the disease.

What are the symptoms of De Quervain's disease?

The patient experiences pain when moving the thumb away from the hand or when twisting the wrist, and has difficulties with activities requiring a firm grip and twisting of the hand. The pain occurs at the base of the thumb and the radial side (same side as the thumb) of the wrist, but gradually may travel into the forearm. The thumb and the same side of the wrist may appear swollen.

Any activity that uses repetitive hand or wrist movements can make the disease worse.

How is De Quervain's disease treated?

Physicians may prescribe anti-inflammatory drugs and pain medication to reduce the pain and inflammation. Medical management of De Quervain's disease may also include splinting the thumb and wrist to avoid those movements that caused the disorder. Most patients with De Quervain's disease respond to medical management, but in some cases, surgical release of the affected tendons may be necessary.

How can we prevent De Quervain's disease?

The prevention of De Quervain's disease includes avoiding excessive movements such as hand and wrist twisting, pinching, forceful gripping, and thumb pressure.

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