

Orthopaedic Connection

Hand and Wrist Pain

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Unless you are under twenty, most everyone experiences hand or wrist trouble at one time or another. Well, that's not completely true, because I do see ganglions even in teenagers, mostly girls it seems.

Look at your hand and wrist. Not too big compared to the rest of your body, but you are looking at a part of the body that contains 27 bones and innumerable ligaments, tendons and nerves! It is impossibly complicated. That is a main reason it is so hard to get the hand and wrist back to working anywhere near normally after a serious injury.

Short of serious injury it can be challenging in trying to figure out what's wrong when these structures are not working right. Fortunately though, you can relax because it is my job to figure it out! It helps to have years of experience treating all the conditions.

Trouble can arise from overuse, trauma, arthritis, infection and sometimes unknown causes. Fortunately, cancerous changes in the hand and wrist are extremely rare.

What's The Cause

I always have to determine whether the problem is coming from the bone and joint structure, tendons, ligaments or nerves. A thorough history, careful exam and plain x-rays fortunately give me the diagnosis in most cases.

David Letterman's Top Ten List (Actually Dr. Haverbush's!)

- Carpal Tunnel
- Ganglion cysts
- Tendinitis of the wrist
- Trigger finger(s)
- Arthritis of the base of the thumb
- Small joint arthritis of the fingers
- Occult fractures
- Dupuytren's Contracture
- Foreign body reaction
- Infection

Think Bigger

Actually in diagnosing hand and wrist problems, I need to think about the whole upper extremity and even the shoulder and neck. It is what I was referring to when I mentioned a thorough history and examination. It only takes a few more minutes, but is worthwhile.

Some patients have neck surgery elsewhere for a cervical disc and their hand and arm pain doesn't get better. Oops! They really had carpal

tunnel. I do a carpal tunnel release and they get better. See what I mean.

It is really beyond the scope of this short article to go into detail about treatment of all the conditions.

Please know that surgery is not always required. So don't stay away because "if you go to a surgeon you will end up with an operation".

Of course surgery is needed sometimes, but not always. There are other choices.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

What if I told you all the musculoskeletal information you need is in one place? It is! Log on to www.orthopodsurgeon.com and you will find -

- The office website and library
- Your Orthopaedic Connection
- Gratiot County Herald Archive of every article I have written (complete text at the click of a mouse).

It contains tons of information you or someone in your family can use.

All of the information available contains what I am treating daily in the office and hospital. I urge you to log on and check it out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush