

Orthopaedic Connection

Ever Hear of de Quervains?

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Sorry, I was just trying to get your attention. By now you know me well enough to know that I wouldn't try to impress you with "Doctor words". I don't like it at all when doctors talk over their patient's heads. So my policy is always to use plain English.

OK, What is it?

It is a painful condition that happens at the wrist on the thumb side. Three tendons going to the thumb pass through a tunnel. Swelling and inflammation in the tissue around the tendons cause the passage to narrow or constrict and the tendons stick. Movements of the thumb become very painful. The patient may think they have arthritis and decide to put up with it. In time, they come to see me and I examine the hand and wrist and take x-rays. The patient is relieved to hear "no arthritis is present". So why the heck do I hurt so much, they say.

Symptoms

- Wrist pain always on the thumb side
- Aggravated by making a fist
- Creaking as the tendons move
- Swelling and tenderness in the affected area

Other Possibilities

- Arthritis on the thumb side of the wrist
- Carpal bone or wrist fracture if there has been trauma
- Unusual presentation of ganglion cyst

My Treatment

- A wrist splint that also immobilizes the thumb
- A two week course of Ibuprofen or similar to treat inflammation
- I might choose to try an injection of a steroid (but there are risks)
- In most cases conservative treatment doesn't work
- Surgical release of the tendons is effective in curing the condition

Surgery

It can be done as an outpatient and you don't have to "go to sleep".

Good Advice

Don't avoid at least having it evaluated. If you are told you have "arthritis" and no x-ray was taken don't accept it. Nine times out of ten if you have these symptoms you have de Quervain's tenosynovitis. It is hard to pronounce, but the treatment is as effective as anything I treat. It is really satisfying to see someone in as much pain as this causes and to be able to eliminate it for them.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

I sincerely hope all of our loyal readers will take advantage of an endless amount of musculoskeletal information. It is easy! Log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com.

It gives access to all Website articles, Your Orthopaedic Connection and every GCH article from most recent to the first. Full text! It covers everything I do in the office and hospital.

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

Dr. Haverbush