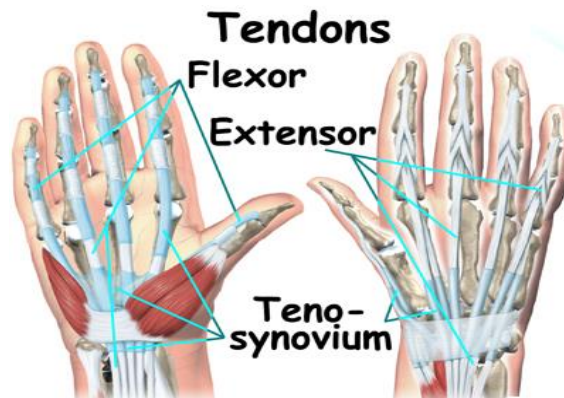


Wrist, hand, thumb and finger problems



[Download our wrist, hand and fingers leaflet here.](#)

The tendons that attach to your thumb and fingers are attached to muscles in your forearm and run across the back (for straightening) or the front (for bending) of your hands and fingers. The tendons on the back of your hand, attached to muscles give you the ability to straighten your fingers and thumbs. Inside the fingers, the tendons are thin and flat and are joined by smaller ones that attach to the hand muscles. It is all intricate and carefully balanced so that we can do fine as well as strong finger movements.

Wrist, hand, thumb and finger problems are very common and can be caused by:

- falling on an outstretched hand
- overuse. Most wrist injuries are the product of micro-stresses repeated again and again. This can also affect the thumb and fingers making it difficult to do up buttons or even write. Causes include texting, typing, sports, computer gaming, playing musical instruments and many jobs. Often the repetition continues for long periods without breaks.
- Muscle imbalances - sometimes muscles have become tight and out of balance over time causing pain, swelling and weakness in the hand and fingers. There is lots we can do to help!
- Chronic problems coming from rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, osteoporosis and many other causes. There may be deformity but there doesn't need to be pain! Let us assess the muscles that move the bones that are so often shortened and spasming. Bursitis and painful ganglions can also occur, and again, we should be able to help.

The signs and symptoms can include: sharp shooting pain, numbness, tingling, weakness, shaking or tremor, spasm, painful clicking and popping, inability to do fine movements, swelling which may be worse at night. These signs and symptoms can go on for long periods of time and can be really disabling.

Sadly, the advice is often: 'learn to live with it' but most of the time something CAN be done.

Taking loads of medication is not advisable – sometimes it is unavoidable, but we certainly don't want to become dependent on drugs with all the effects they have on all the organs of our body as well as our minds and emotions. Drugs are telling the brain that there isn't a problem when actually, there is. Usually, something can be done.

If there is obvious deformity or severe swelling and/or you have had a fall, there may be a fracture that needs attention or it may be dislocated (bones out of position).

WHEN IN DOUBT, GET IT X-RAYED!

Most wrist, hand and finger problems need multifaceted treatment. Therefore, body work therapies offered by Brooks-Carter Clinic are well worth trying to help ease wrist, hand, finger and thumb pain. We aim to treat not only the signs and symptoms but also look at the source of the problem which may well be in the neck! Read about [Carpal Tunnel Syndrome](#) for more info.

Our first aim is to relieve pain which will probably involve using massage/soft tissue techniques to encourage drainage from the damaged and inflamed area. We don't make assumptions – we treat everyone as the unique person they are. Once the wrist and hand are used more (because there is less pain), that helps drainage. The better the drainage the more optimum the blood flow. This brings healing nutrients and oxygen to the area.

Often, the cause is not where the pain is!

Upper arm problems can also cause problems in the wrist, hand, fingers and thumb.

Sometimes, the positions we use to do certain activities are not the best – we have developed bad habits with posture, for example. We should be able to guide you with strengthening exercises, self-care, postural help and so on. Really, we want to put you in charge and then use us as a back-up when things get difficult. This is often the case when the wrist and hand pain is due to chronic problems such as rheumatoid arthritis.

As pain decreases and movement increases, we can advise you with exercises and stretches.

Treatment will include soft tissue work, (Swedish Massage, Remedial Massage) which will help in reducing inflammation and stress on the finger, thumb, hand or wrist muscles, tendons, ligaments, and their coverings (*a bit like cling film*).

Wrist tendonitis, thumb tendonitis, finger tendonitis are seen frequently (*and they often have fancy titles*). Athletes often have problems but really many of us are 'athletes' including the osteopath and massage therapist! Musicians often attend with problems with wrists, hands, and fingers.

The muscle attaches to the tendon which attaches to the bone and this tendon can become inflamed – again with repetitive use and lack of self-care. We can assess what movements are difficult and painful and work out what to do.

Just as [tennis](#) and [golfer's elbow](#) and [carpal tunnel syndrome](#) are a problem so is wrist tendonitis or finger tendonitis.

Acute wrist sprain or wrist tendinitis – what to do:

If it has just happened, the advice is RICER Rest Ice, Compression, Elevation and if it is due to a fall – the 'r' is for refer. Get it X-rayed.

- Reduce the swelling and pain in the wrist using ice, a compression bandage or tubi-grip, lavender based creams or arnica cream. (Taking an arnica tablet is also a great idea after any injury).

- After 24 hours, when the inflammation should be lessening, the role of massage therapy is almost magical. After gentle massage, deeper work can be done depending on comfort levels and then the area can be mobilised using special movements that can be continued at home.
- If this has happened before, repeat appointments will probably be advised to eliminate the sticky bits from previous injuries (scar tissue). We really want the area to repair with 'like' tissue. We want muscle tissue to repair muscles – not the fibrous scar tissue. Working to release the scar tissue will enable the wrist to restore to its previous strength and mobility.

LIST OF THERAPIES HERE SAME AS CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME