

Considering how often we use our hands, it is extremely important they function well and work properly. It is very common to acquire hand pain, especially as we age.



Common Causes

“Arthritis is the most common cause of disability in the United States, limiting the activities of nearly 21 million adults.” (<http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/>) According to the CDC, 60% of all people with arthritis are women. Arthritis can occur in any joint of the body, but it is most commonly found in the hands. There are different types of arthritis. These include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and even juvenile idiopathic arthritis.

Ulnar nerve injury, or Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is another common cause of hand pain. In these cases, you normally see numbness and/or weakness of the hands; untreated, this may progress into muscle atrophy, immobility, and possible nerve death in extreme cases. When diagnosed with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) it is highly recommended to be treated by a medical professional.

Hand injuries can also occur in those who work mostly with their hands, whether it be painters, musicians, or administrators. When you do not allow rest between each activity, tendons and muscles may become inflamed and fatigued. There are many symptoms that will occur with a hand injury. These include but are not limited to: swelling, stiffness, aching, and increased pain with activity.

Traumatic hand injuries can occur during a fall, sports participation or car accidents. Common forms of traumatic hand injuries can be broken bones, sprained wrists, dislocated fingers, and torn or sprained tendons.

HAND PAIN GUIDE

Treatment

Many hand injuries and pain can be treated with physical therapy. The most important part of your hand injury recovery is rest. Though rest is a very important tool, activities such as slow, gentle, finger and wrist circles can help maintain your range of motion.

We have all been taught to apply ice on an injury to reduce the swelling and inflammation, but heat is also a great tool to use when you have stiff or sore joints. Remember to use either ice or heat throughout the day to help with your healing process.

After a hand injury, adjustments to daily activities are necessary in most cases. Those adjustments can make a huge difference in how you feel day to day. We strongly suggest taking frequent breaks between normal activities, utilizing a hand/wrist/finger brace and always being conscious of your form. For chronic or long term pain such as arthritis, adjustments to your lifestyle should only come after seeking professional treatment.

For all sudden, severe, or traumatic pain or injuries, we advise you immediately see a Medical Professional.

Here at Physical Therapy of Idaho we strongly believe gentle stretching and controlled strengthening exercises can not only heal an injured hand but reduce the chances of re-injury.

What to expect from a hand evaluation at Physical Therapy of Idaho

- Range of motion measurements: this is to determine how much movement you have in your hand.
- Palpation: touching various structures around the hand, wrist and forearm to feel for abnormalities or painful-to-touch structures.
- Strength measurement: testing the strength of muscles around the hand and wrist to determine weakness or imbalances.
- Girth or swelling measurement: swelling in the hand/wrist can occur after injury. This can be measured and monitored by your physical therapist.
- Special tests: these tests are specific maneuvers performed on the hand/wrist/forearm to help determine what specific structure is causing pain or problems.

Most insurance carriers do not require a doctor's referral for you to commence treatment at Physical Therapy of Idaho. We can usually get you in for your evaluation within 24 hours of calling for an appointment, so relief may be only a phone call away. Our physical therapists have between 10 and 20 years of experience in treating pain and injuries, so let us help you get you back to your best, pain free. Call us today!