

PERSONAL
MESSAGE

What can a Certified Hand Therapist do for you?

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“IF MY HANDS HURT...”



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Welcome to the first issue of *Hand Therapists In Touch* magazine. In this magazine you will receive real-world help and information that can lead to less pain and better function and performance in the use of your hands and upper extremities.

Hands are used for most tasks at home, work and in leisure activities. As I'm sure you'll agree, they are extremely valuable. Any pain or loss of function in a hand, arm or shoulder can devastate a person's life. Hand pain can cause a person to stop using one hand correctly and overwork the opposite hand. If a person begins to use his arm differently because of hand pain, it can lead to wrist and shoulder pain.

A Certified Hand Therapist is part of an exceptional group of Occupational Therapists or Physical Therapists who have a minimum of five years of clinical experience, including 2000 hours or more of direct practice in hand therapy. In addition, the Certified Hand Therapist must successfully pass a comprehensive test of advanced clinical skills and theory in upper extremity rehabilitation. When fully certified, the therapist is allowed to put CHT after his/her name. This distinguishes an occupational therapist or physical therapist as someone with the highest professional credential in the specialty of upper extremity rehabilitation.

Having met the standards set by the Hand Therapy Certification Commission, the Certified Hand Therapist can offer to the public assurance that as a treating therapist he/she has achieved the highest level of competency in the profession and stays current in the field of upper extremity



*Mariann Moran, MBA, OTR, CHT
Accelerated hand Therapy And Rehabilitation, Inc.*

rehabilitation. Certification is voluntary and difficult to attain, requiring advanced studying and training.

The anatomy of the hand is intricate. Surgery on the upper extremity is often very delicate using microscopic techniques. The technical complexity of this type of surgery necessitates a high level of competence during the postoperative recovery by a therapist with advanced skills in upper extremity rehabilitation. The hand therapist is also highly skilled in custom splinting techniques to help the patient achieve the highest level of function.

Using specialized skills in assessment of pain, swelling, loss of motion or strength, the therapist can determine the appropriate course of treatment. The hand therapist is skilled in assessing nerve changes, such as numbness and tingling, to determine the need for splinting and ergonomic changes at work or home. The primary goal of therapy is to restore to the patient a pain-free, functional hand allowing them to participate in the work and leisure activities that they enjoy. A Certified Hand Therapist is recognized by many professional organizations as a benchmark for excellence in upper extremity rehabilitation.

“If my hands hurt...”

“If my hands hurt, I must have carpal tunnel” is a common statement that we as hand therapists often hear. Because carpal tunnel is the “diagnosis of the week”, many people assume that is what they have if their hands hurt. But, there are many reasons why a person can have hand pain. Pain and dysfunction come from disease such as arthritis or trauma such as fractures.

Pain and discomfort generally come from four major areas: nerve irritation as in carpal tunnel, muscle or tendon problems such as tendonitis, ligament damage as in sprain or strains, or joint involvement as in arthritis. The physician making the diagnosis could be a hand surgeon, orthopedic, neurologist, or a family practice physician. The physician will do a history, physical exam and specialized tests to make the appropriate diagnosis of the condition. With this information, the doctor will make the diagnosis and recommend treatment options including, especially, hand therapy.

Carpal Tunnel

Nerves that are compressed or pinched can cause pain and dysfunction. Carpal tunnel is a compression of the median nerve near the wrist. Carpal tunnel is a common problem associated with computer work and repetitive work. The first and most common complaint of carpal tunnel is numbness and tingling and occasionally pain in the hand. If the numbness and pain are present when he/she wakes up, it is time to see a professional. If left untreated this condition can cause permanent nerve damage.

Treatment begins conservatively with a splint and anti-inflammatory

medications. The splint is used first at night but may be used during activities if indicated by the therapist. It can be custom-made by the therapist and/or fitted by the therapist in order to ensure that the wrist is resting at the correct angle. Hand therapy initially includes a thorough evaluation to identify possible causes of the compression of the nerve. Many people think that the only way to get carpal tunnel is by typing, however there are many other factors and reasons why it may develop. How a person sleeps, drives, or does activities repetitively at home and on the job can cause problems. Modification can be made to a task in order to minimize nerve compression. Exercises and stretching are also introduced. If conservative treatment proves not helpful then surgery may be necessary.

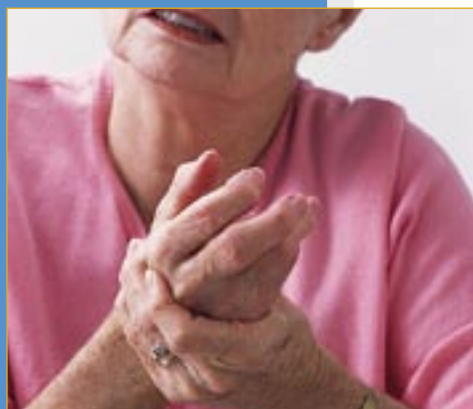
Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis, which is a result of normal wear and tear of joints, can cause pain in the hands. It is a slow-progressing disease that primarily affects the hands, knees, and hips. A very common spot for this arthritis is the base of the thumb. Thumb pain during normal activities such as cooking, writing or holding a coffee cup, are the most common complaints. Hand therapy may include a custom splint fabricated to protect the joint while still allowing the patient to use the hand. The patient will be provided with exercises to maintain range of motion and strength. Information will be provided to the patient so they may continue using their hands comfortably.

Tendonitis

Tendonitis of the muscles in the hand and forearm can also cause pain and discomfort.

Proper treatment at the right time limits pain, discomfort and decreased function. Do not ignore negative feelings in your hands! Investigate and get professional advice as soon as possible.



Tendonitis is the inflammation of a tendon (the rope type structure that connects muscles to bones) and its surrounding tissues. It is commonly seen in the wrist and finger when the tendons become irritated from overuse, injury, or excessive exercise. The tendons then swell causing pain and discomfort with continued use. One specific condition is called DeQuervain's Tenosynovitis also known as "washer woman's syndrome" (getting its name from the old fashion way of wringing out clothes). It may be aggravated by infant care activities, as well as repetitive wrist movement. Another common condition is called "trigger finger" or "trigger thumb." With this condition the finger or thumb becomes locked in a bent position and the patient must use the opposite hand to pry it open.

The treatment for any condition considered an "-itis" such as tendonitis, is resting of the area with a custom-made splint, in effort to decrease the pain. Once the painful symptoms subside then exercises are given to improve normal function. Also included in the treatment process is information on preventing the condition from reoccurring. Education on prevention is a crucial part of the treatment process.

Dupuytren's Disease

Dupuytren's Disease or Dupuytren's Contracture is a thickening of the fascia (the tough tissue that lies just below the skin). Small lumps or bands appear which may eventually pull the fingers into the palm. Dupuytren's Disease may run in families, but may also be associated with cigarette smoking, vascular disease, epilepsy, repetitive activities, and diabetes. Surgery may be necessary in order to correct the problem. Treatment such as splinting and exercises to improve function is recommended after surgery.

Trauma

Wrist pain with bruising and swelling

is a sign of an injury following trauma. The signs of a possible broken bone or fracture include pain, misshapen joints and an inability to move the wrist, hand, or a finger. If these symptoms occur, it is important to seek medical attention immediately. In cases where there is no misshapen joints, patients may wait to see if the pain may be from a sprain or a strain. A sprain and strain are both a tear in the ligaments (tissue that connect bone to bone). The degree of damage to the ligament will determine if

conservative treatment or surgery would be indicated. Splinting would play a major role in conservative treatment.

Don't wait . . .

Proper treatment at the right time limits pain, discomfort and improves function. Do not ignore what you feel in your hands! Find out why you are having pain by seeing your doctor and a hand therapist as soon as possible.

TIPS AND TRICKS TO PREVENT CARPAL TUNNEL

Being in good physical shape and eating healthy food will help the body respond to the stresses of repetitive movement and other abuses. This will increase blood flow to the muscles to aid the healing process.

Avoid repetitive wrist movements. Try to use larger muscle groups.

Pace work so that repetitive tasks and typing are interspersed with other types of tasks.

When you feel discomfort in your hands or arms, change how you are doing the task or stop the task and do some stretches before going back to the activity.



At Home:

Watch static postures of the wrist at any extreme position especially sleeping and driving.



Avoid repetitive wrist movements with hobbies and crafts such as wood working and needlepoint.

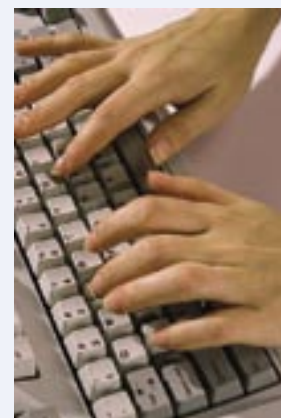
At Work:

Set up your workstation with the keyboard at a level where the elbows are bent at 90 or more and the wrists are straight.

Wrist rests are for resting, you should not keep the wrists resting on them when typing.

A negative tilt of the keyboard is helpful to keep the wrist in a neutral position especially while resting during typing.

A "natural" or split keyboard is not essential but it can help some people, especially those with a large body.



FAQ

Is all hand pain Carpal Tunnel?

Many things including repetitive movements, trauma or disease can cause pain. A proper diagnosis is very important to determine the appropriate type of treatment.

Will my hand pain go away by itself?

Some pain will go away on its own. Other pain needs definitive treatment such as anti-inflammatory medication and splinting

Can arthritis be cured?

Arthritis is not “curable” but treatment can help decrease pain and inflammation and improve function. Custom designed splints can help prevent deformity and allow for more function.

What causes numbness and tingling?

Prolonged compression of the nerve will cause numbness and tingling—signals that the nerve is in danger of being hurt and you should move your hands.

Should I avoid all activity that hurts my hands?

Activity is good for the joints. Motion is like a lotion to the joints. You should change the way you do something if it causes pain, but not stop all activities (example: lifting a child from under the arms hurts the hands, change the way you lift to use the forearm). Some activities are impossible to avoid such as writing, but getting a better pen or taking mini-breaks will minimize pain.

Take this simple test...

Call your certified Hand Therapist if you:

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wake up with numbness or tingling.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have numbness or tingling that wakes you up.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Must stop an activity due to pain.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Must take medication to help alleviate pain more than once per week.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stop doing hobbies or sports due to decreased function.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lose your grip and seem to be dropping more things than usual.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have pain when gripping things.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been following self-care treatments for 2 weeks but still have pain.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your hand is swollen and it lasts more than 1 week.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have had a fall or trauma resulting in severe pain.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Typing causes you pain or discomfort.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your hand cramps after you write for a while.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your hand feels achy and weak.

Results:

Less than 3 Yes

You're doing fine. Exercising may help keep your hands in check.

Between 3 and 6 Yes

Hand Therapy could definitely be an option for you.

More than 6 Yes

We would advise you to see a doctor to get a better diagnosis, but Hand Therapy is definitely an option.



Simply place a check mark in the appropriate box. Once you are done, calculate the number of checks in the YES column and look at the results.

Featured Certified Hand Therapist



Doris Schanzer, OTR, CHT

Doris Schanzer, OTR, CHT, graduated from Universidad de Chile and received her diploma in Occupational Therapy in 1971. She has been working exclusively in the area of hand therapy, since 1990. She became a Certified Hand Therapist in 1994, was recertified in 1999, and again in 2004. She has been at Accelerated Hand Therapy since 1996.

Previously, Doris was the coordinator of hand services at the Kessler Institute for rehabilitation in Saddle Brook, NJ. She was involved in program development and implementation, direct patient treatment, marketing, and administration of the Kessler Hand Center created in 1990.

She has over 30 years of experience in several areas of physical rehabilitation and 14 years of experience in the area of hand rehabilitation. This experience is helpful in looking at a patient as a whole functional being, thus integrating functional tasks and needs into treatment.

Doris is an active member of the American Society of Hand Therapists as well as the New Jersey chapter. She has a strong interest in splinting design and innovation.

Doris has presented on topics such as Splinting, Repetitive Stress Injuries and the Role of the Hand Therapist to various groups. Publications include "The Crucial Role of the Hand Therapist" in New Jersey Rehabilitation magazine. She published a new splint design in The Journal of Hand Therapy, October, 2000.

SUCCESSES

What patients are saying...

I enjoyed going to therapy and my therapist was so nice and kind. Overall I think my therapy was great and she always took good care of me. —M.S.

I want to thank you so much for your kind and thoughtful ways, and for your care and concern during my therapy. Your encouragement meant so much and is deeply appreciated. You made therapy something I really looked forward to. —A.B.

I just wanted to say Thank You for

all you have done for my daughter. Just knowing you are around for advice and help makes a world of difference. I

appreciate the phone call last week to see how she was doing. It meant so much to know you were thinking of her. Thank you again for helping my daughter and myself!

—C.S.


Thank you for everything! Your professionalism, your humor, your caring and most of all your understanding! —L.M.

The staff is truly extraordinary. They were courteous, compassionate, and helpful at all times. Expectations were exceeded in all respects. I regained full use of my hand and felt as though I made new friends.

You are extremely fortunate to have such a caring and talented staff representing your organization. —N.D.



**Tired of having
HAND PAIN?**



**Come and Visit Us for a
FREE SCREENING**
Find out if Hand Therapy can help
you ease the pain and improve your
function and quality of life.

1-888-656-HAND
www.acceleratedhand.com



Accelerated Hand Therapy, with six locations in northern New Jersey, offers specialized care for hand or upper extremity problems, including arthritis, traumatic injuries, fractures, amputations, and carpal tunnel. Convenient hours, various locations, and participation with various health plans allow us to help as many of you as possible.

Our Certified Hand Therapists and Occupational Therapists are committed to providing the most up to date assessment and treatment techniques utilizing state of the art equipment. We take the patient from acute care to return to work and leisure activities.

Our commitment to making sure you improve is unparalleled in the industry. This is why so many doctors refer their patients to us.



1-888-656-HAND

Hackensack, Morristown, Parsippany, Somerset, Union, West Orange

Accelerated Hand Therapy and Rehabilitation, Inc.
Administrative Office
2 Shunpike Road, Suite 37
Madison, NJ 07940

Parsippany Office:
1259 Route 46 East, Bldg 3
Parsippany, NJ 07054
973-334-4321

Somerset Office:
7 Cedar Grove Lane, Ste 39
Somerset, NJ 08873
732-469-5680

Morristown Office:
111 Madison Av., Ste 303
Morristown, NJ 07960
973-267-0991

Hackensack Office:
385 Prospect Av.
Hackensack, NJ 07601
201-343-5470

Union Office:
2333 Morris Av., Ste B5
Union, NJ 07083
908-686-8766

West Orange Office:
81 Northfield Av.
West Orange, NJ 07052
973-731-1950



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