

# Thumb Hurt? Wrist Sore? Hands Tired? *Text Messaging May Be To Blame*

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If you're experiencing any of these hand pains, you may not be alone. Today's trend toward smaller cell phones, palm pilots, hand-held games and computers is placing more stress and work on an individual's wrist and thumbs. The ease of holding these devices and being able to access business and friends quickly and efficiently may be asking too much.

Repetitive strain injuries are being seen by therapists in clients of all ages. The playing of smaller computer games along with text messaging is increasing the risk in school age children. The use of PDA-combined cell phone units along with computer use is adding to the cause.

## What Is a Repetitive Strain Injury?

A repetitive strain injury is also known as tendonitis, an inflammation in the tendons that work to move your joints. Constant, repetitive over use of isolated and/or combined tendon muscle use,

along with prolonged static postures, cause these injuries.

Symptoms can include stiffness, cramping, fatigue, numbness, swelling, decreased grip, creaking over the tendon, and shooting pain. These symptoms can start intermittently, and worsen with certain activities, lessen while on holiday breaks or vacations, then become more constant as activities increase again.

If you are already experiencing symptoms of repetitive strain, it's not too late to change those habits. Start pacing yourself now. Take rest breaks and vary your activity. Watch how you are holding the phone and PDA. Give your thumbs a break from texting. If symptoms continue, see a hand surgeon. A referral for hand therapy, an injection, or surgery may be needed.

**To learn more, contact the Hand Therapy/Occupational Therapy Program at 937/208-2111.**



Christine Partin is part of the MVH Hand Therapy Program in the Rehabilitation Institute of Ohio at MVH.

## Helpful Hints

Prevention is the key. Some helpful practices are:

- Take 10-minute rest breaks every hour of continuous texting or keyboarding;
- Do light stretching of the wrist, forearm, fingers and thumb;
- Follow good posture rules and exercise proper seating at the computer;
- Reposition hands for better alignment;
- Use both hands and alternate thumb to index use in texting; and
- Pace yourself in texting.



Incorrect



Correct