

# Condition of the Week

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By Randal Burkholder, DC

## Are You Losing Your Grip? I mean that literally!

If you feel like your hand grip just isn't what it used to be, it may be time to take action. While it is true that we gradually lose muscle strength as we get older, pain while gripping, uneven grip strength in one hand compared to the other, or loss of strength combined with tingling or numbness are not normal and may be a sign of an underlying problem.



### The Culprits:

#### **Basal Joint Arthritis**

If you feel pain on the thumb side of your hand, just below your wrist (towards your hand) and are over 50 or work extensively with your hands, then Basal Joint Arthritis could be the cause of your problem. Basal Joint Arthritis is joint degeneration due to excessive wear and tear

(repetitive motions) of your hand and wrist. It happens at the joint where your thumb is connected to your hand and is often irritated by gripping or pinching objects between your thumb and fingers.

#### **Pinched Nerves**

There are three major nerves in your forearm and hand. These nerves originate in your spine from your mid neck to just above your shoulder blades. Pinching or irritation at your spine or along the course of the nerve can lead to weakening of the muscles of the wrist and hand. This type of weakness will often be associated with neck or upper back pain, or tingling or numbness in the hand or fingers. If you suspect that you have this condition do not wait to take action. Weakness due to nerve injury can become permanent if the injury is severe or long-standing.

## **Tendinitis**

Your fingers, hands and wrists are moved by muscles and tendons that run from your hand to your elbow along the front and back of your forearm. Repetitive hand and wrist motions like typing on a computer, sewing, or repetitively manipulating small objects over-work those muscles and tendons and cause them to gradually weaken and scar. Oh yeah, it can also cause a loss of grip strength.

## **The Lowest Common Denominator**

Nerve impingement, tendinitis, and arthritis all result from abnormal stress brought to bear on muscles and joints over an extended time. This stress is usually the result of repetitive motion, repetitive poor posture, and damage from old and often forgotten injuries. Since these causes are usually not immediately painful their effects can build for months or years before you are aware that a problem is brewing.

Repetitive Abnormal Stress X Time = A Problem

## **Tips to Keep You Hands Strong and Healthy**

- ❖ Exercise and stretch on a daily basis (hint: if you sit all day try to do exercises and stretches that pull you into an erect position and open the front of your body - it helps to promote muscle balance)
- ❖ Knead Play-Doh for five minutes each day
- ❖ Wrap a thin rubber-band around all of your fingers & thumb then open your hand against the resistance - up to 30 times daily
- ❖ Avoid activities that repetitively bend your wrist or repetitively and forcefully extend or twist your elbow
- ❖ Talk to your Chiropractor about any activity you consistently engage in for more than 30 minutes a day
- ❖ Give us a call: If you already experience hand weakness, pain, tingling or numbness then it is time to get some extra help!

Do you know someone with hand weakness, pain, tingling or numbness? We would love to help and will gladly address any questions you may have about this topic.

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