Pain in the Palm of the Hand

Understanding causes, symptoms and recovery

Palm Pain: Understanding and Management

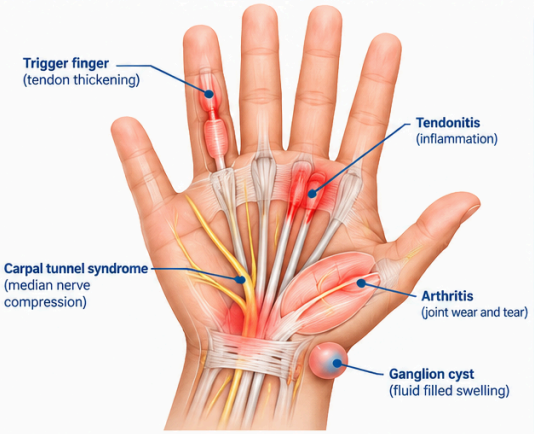
A guide to causes, treatment and self-care

Pain in the Palm of the Hand (Adult)

Common causes, symptoms and management

1 What is palm pain?

Pain in the palm of the hand is a common problem in adults and can range from mild discomfort to significant pain that affects daily activities such as gripping, writing or lifting. It may come on suddenly or develop gradually over time.



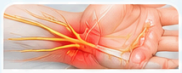
2 Common causes



Overuse or strain
Repetitive gripping, typing or manual work



Tendon conditions
Tendonitis, trigger finger or tenosynovitis



Nerve-related causes
Carpal tunnel syndrome or ulnar nerve irritation



Joint and bone problems
Arthritis, previous injury or small cysts



Skin and tissue conditions
Calluses, infection or Dupuytren's disease



Activities and sports
Use of tools, vibrating equipment or sports

3 Common symptoms



Pain in the palm
Aching or sharp pain



Pain when gripping
or squeezing objects



Stiffness or swelling



Tingling or numbness in fingers



Weakness in the hand



Clicking or locking of fingers

4 Managing palm pain



Rest and activity modification
Avoid activities that worsen the pain and take regular breaks.



Pain relief
Paracetamol or ibuprofen (if suitable). Apply ice for 10–15 minutes, 2–3 times a day.



Exercises and movement
Gentle finger and hand movements to prevent stiffness.



Support
Wrist or hand splints may help and padding gloves for manual work.

5 When to seek medical advice

- Pain is severe or worsening
- Symptoms last longer than 4–6 weeks
- Numbness, tingling or weakness
- The hand becomes red, hot or swollen
- You cannot fully move your fingers
- There is a history of injury or infection

What is palm pain?

Palm pain may be mild or severe and can make gripping, writing or lifting difficult. Symptoms may begin suddenly or develop gradually.

Common causes

Repetitive hand use, tendon problems, nerve irritation, arthritis, cysts and previous injuries can all contribute to pain in the palm.

Common causes and symptoms

Recognising what may be contributing to palm pain

Overuse or strain

Repetitive gripping, typing, manual work, racket sports, weightlifting and prolonged use of vibrating tools.

Tendon and soft tissue conditions

Flexor tendon strain, tendinitis, tenosynovitis and trigger finger, which may catch or lock.

Nerve-related causes

Carpal tunnel syndrome may cause tingling or numbness; ulnar nerve irritation may affect the ring and little finger side.

Joint and bone problems

Arthritis at the thumb or finger joints, previous injuries, fractures and ganglion cysts.

Skin and tissue conditions

Calluses, infection and Dupuytren’s disease, which thickens tissue in the palm.

Symptoms you may notice

Aching or sharp pain, discomfort gripping, stiffness, swelling, tingling, weakness or clicking and locking fingers.

Important information

A red, hot or swollen hand, severe pain, new weakness or symptoms after injury need medical assessment.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gentle movements to support flexibility and strength

Hand and palm exercise examples

Exercise gently and regularly. Stop or modify movements if pain increases.



Exercise safety

Move within a comfortable range and build up gradually.

Seek advice if pain, tingling or weakness increases.

Treatment and management

Treatment options, outlook and when to seek help

1. Physiotherapy or hand therapy

A therapist may recommend exercises, activity changes and strategies to restore hand function.

2. Splints or braces

Support may be recommended for some conditions, depending on the cause of symptoms.

3. Further assessment

Ultrasound, nerve tests or specialist referral may be considered when appropriate.

4. Other treatment options

Some conditions may require steroid injections or specialist treatment.

Outlook

Most causes of palm pain improve with appropriate self-care and treatment. Early management may support recovery.

Important information - when to seek help

Seek advice for severe or worsening pain, symptoms beyond 4–6 weeks, numbness, weakness, redness, swelling or difficulty moving fingers.

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