

# ASK US WHERE

You can find relief from hand pain and get back to doing what you love.

**Our hands are one of the most hardworking parts of our bodies.** Each of the 27 bones, 29 joints and approximately 123 ligaments work together every day so we can accomplish thousands of tasks, both simple and complex. It's easy to overlook just how much our hands do for us, but if you start experiencing hand pain or discomfort, your entire life is interrupted. It can make even the most basic day-to-day activities incredibly difficult. Sometimes, hand pain can even signal a more significant condition. From arthritis to carpal tunnel syndrome and tenosynovitis, we take hand issues seriously at Reading Hospital.

**Arthritis:** Inflammation of one or more joints causing our cartilage to break down, which means our joint's protective barrier cannot move smoothly or absorb shock. Without enough cartilage, our bones rub together — causing the pain, swelling and stiffness that's associated with arthritis. Joint inflammation may also be caused by a variety of other conditions including autoimmune diseases, broken bones, infections or general wear and tear on the joints.

**Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:** When the median nerve (which supplies sensation and helps with hand and finger movement) is squeezed or pressured as it passes through the wrist and enters the hand (an area called the carpal tunnel), carpal tunnel syndrome occurs. Because the carpal passageway is stiff, any swelling in this area can put pressure on

the median nerve, which then affects sensation in our hand(s) — often felt as numbness or tingling. Many conditions are linked with carpal tunnel syndrome such as diabetes, thyroid dysfunction, pregnancy or menopause, rheumatoid arthritis and fractures to the wrist.

**Tenosynovitis:** Most commonly experienced in the wrists, hands and feet, tenosynovitis is an inflammation of the sheath that surrounds a tendon called the synovium — where our muscles connect to the bone at a joint. This inflammation can cause pain, swelling and difficulty moving the affected joint. While the cause of the inflammation may be unknown, it can also result from infection, injury, overuse or a strain. If an infected cut to the hands or wrists is the cause of tenosynovitis, emergency surgery may be required.



**Diagnosing any hand condition at Reading Hospital always begins with a physical examination.** Your doctor will check for numbness in the palm, thumb, index and middle finger, thumb side of the ring finger or a weak hand grip. Wrist x-rays will be performed to diagnose conditions such as wrist arthritis. An electromyography or nerve conduction velocity test can reveal key indicators for carpal tunnel syndrome, such as decreased nerve conduction across the wrist.

**For less severe conditions, your physician may recommend non-surgical treatments** including anti-inflammatory medications, occupational therapy, workplace modifications or wrist splints to help relieve your pain or discomfort. You can also make lifestyle modifications to reduce stress to your wrist, by using ergonomic devices such as cushioned mouse pads and keyboard drawers. When medication and/or lifestyle modifications are not enough, hand surgery may be an option for you.

**If you're experiencing hand pain, don't wait to consult a physician.** Receiving an accurate diagnosis is the first step towards developing the most effective treatment plan for you so that you can get back to living the life you love. At Reading Hospital, you'll work closely with a collaborative team of board certified physicians, specialists and nurses — each focused on ensuring you have access to the resources you need to return to your everyday life, free from hand pain or discomfort.

Discover the ways our award-winning orthopedic team can get you back to the life you love without joint pain at [RHOrtho.org](https://www.rhortho.org).

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