

FITZPATRICK PHYSICAL THERAPY

July 2007
Volume 1
No. 2

Free Supervised Childcare and Extended Hours

Handy Tips for Healthy Hands from Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy!

Our hands work hard, nimbly helping us through our day. They are a tool that helps us manipulate our environment. Hands are also the chief source of our sense of touch and a large part of our ability to communicate.

Healthy hands are a handy thing to have. But what happens when the health of our hands is compromised? That's when seeing a Certified Hand Therapist might be the right choice.

WHAT IS A CERTIFIED HAND THERAPIST?

A Certified hand therapist is an occupational or physical therapist who, through *advanced study*, specializes in rehabilitating patients with conditions affecting the hands and upper extremities.

Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy is fortunate to have **Debra Norman, OTR/L, CHT**, a most experienced Certified Hand Therapist seeing patients at both our clinics in Placerville and El Dorado Hills.

Because of Debra's advanced training and study, she has the ability and experience to treat a wide variety of patients. She treats patients with the following problems and more (call to inquire about your personal situation):

- Chronic disorders such as arthritis
- Cumulative trauma disorders (tennis elbow or carpal tunnel syndrome)



- Problems from an accident or trauma (wounds, scars, burns, injured tendons or nerves, fractures or even amputation)

Treatment often starts within days of the injury or surgery, right through the patient's return to work and/or a productive lifestyle. Treatments can include:

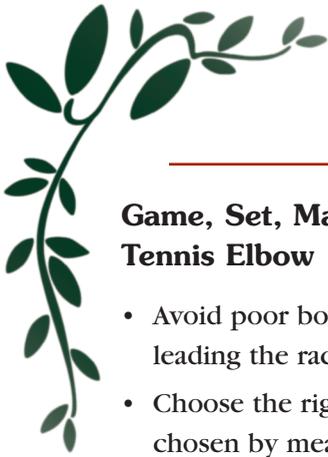
Postoperative Rehabilitation

- Management of open or sutured wounds (prevention of infection/assistance in healing)
- Control of hypertrophic (raised and/or swollen) or hypersensitive scars
- Reduction of swelling

Preventative, Non-operative, or Conservative Treatment

- Management of acute or chronic pain
- Desensitization following nerve injury or trauma
- Sensory re-education after nerve injury
- Design and implementation of exercise programs to increase motion, dexterity and/or strength
- Splint Fabrication for prevention or corrections of injury
- Training in the performance of daily life skills through adapted methods and equipment

REMEMBER: Prevention is best, however if pain is already an issue, Debra Norman, OTR/L, CHT, a Certified Hand Therapist experienced in all disorders of the hand and upper extremities, is accepting new patients at Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy's El Dorado Hills and Placerville clinics. Please call us today with any questions.



Ways to help keep your hands healthy from Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy

Game, Set, Match to Preventing Tennis Elbow

- Avoid poor body positioning with the elbow leading the racquet
- Choose the right size grip: Grip size should be chosen by measuring the distance from the crease of your palm to the tip of the ring finger.
- Correct string tension: Professionals suggest that the tension be at the manufacturer's lowest recommendation.
- Try a two-handed backhand to relieve stress placed on the forearm extensor musculature that originates at the elbow. These are the muscles that are contributing to the pain!
- Stretch and warm up before your match. Ice the area well after your match. This will help decrease your chances of inflammation and re-injury.

Protecting Kids from Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) and Tendonitis

While playing video games . . .

- Make sure they use a neutral grip when holding the controller. A neutral grip is when the wrist is straight, not bent in either direction. It will allow for wrist motion in a plane where more motion is available to the wrist.
- Ask them to take a break every hour or switch to another activity. It is overuse of repetitive motions such as pressing buttons that can cause injury.
- Don't let your child sit back on their knees. Bending the knees this far is not only a hard position for the knee joint, but it requires your child to push most of their weight up with his/her hands and wrists, placing increased pressure on these joints as well.
- When using a hand held device (such as a game boy), encourage your child to put pillows in their lap and rest arms on pillows. This will allow them to keep their head in a more upright position and decrease neck strain. The pillows

will help to support the arms so that they do not have to be held up in the air.

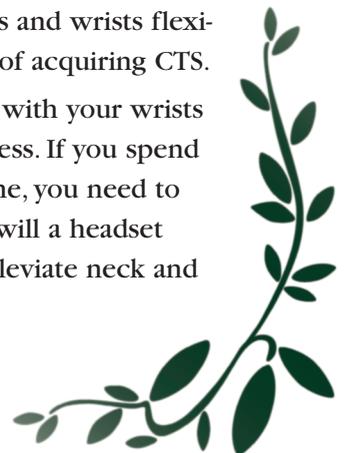
When using the computer . . .

- Make sure the monitor is at the correct height. While looking at the horizon, your child's eyes should be looking at the top of the monitor (this may vary if your child wears glasses).
- If your child is typing, the keyboard should be at a height so that when their wrists and hands are straight; their forearms are parallel to the keyboard surface.
- Whenever possible, your child should be sitting in an appropriate chair. This would be a chair that allows them to comfortably put their feet on the floor and also provides good back support.
- When using a mouse, encourage your child to switch hands frequently. This will allow one hand to rest and reduce fatigue.



Preventing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) in the Workplace

- When using the computer, use a padded wrist rest so that your wrists sit comfortably on the table in front of the keyboard.
- Stop typing every 30 minutes and stretch your hands and wrists. Spread your hands and fingers wide and then ball them into a fist. Repeat 5 times. Rotate your wrists 5 times in one direction, then 5 times in the alternate direction. These exercises will keep your hands and wrists flexible and decrease the chances of acquiring CTS.
- Holding the telephone all day with your wrists extended can cause undue stress. If you spend much of your day on the phone, you need to switch to a headset. Not only will a headset prevent CTS, but it will also alleviate neck and upper back pain.



Free Supervised Childcare and Extended Hours