

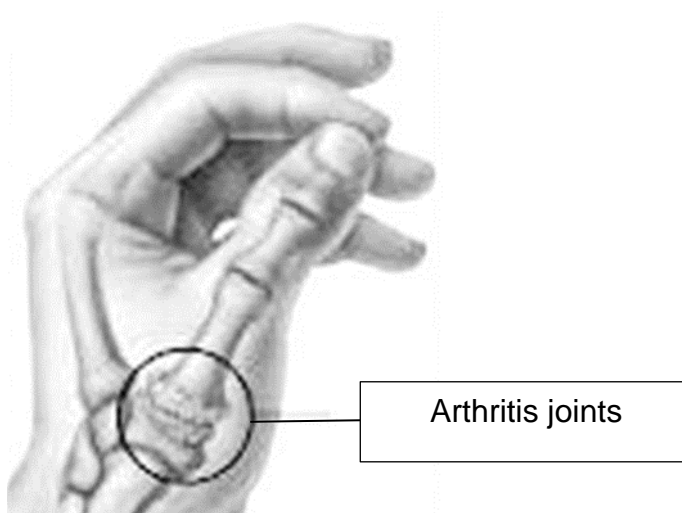
Patient information

Osteoarthritis (OA) of the Base of the Thumb Carpometacarpal Joint (CMC)

Therapies Department

May also be called:

- Arthritis of the 1st CMC joint
- CMC joint OA
- Basal joint arthritis / OA

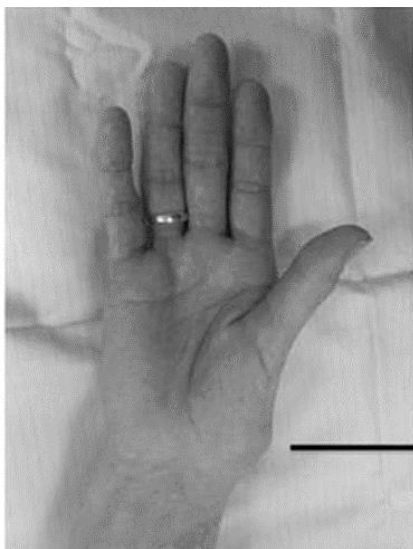


Cause

- The surfaces of the CMC joint are lined with cartilage which is softer than bone. Cartilage protects the joint and ensures smooth movement. In osteoarthritis this surface progressively becomes worn away and eventually leads to pain.
- Over time, as a result of the wear and tear, the joint space narrows and the
- Supporting ligaments become loose.
- These combined factors can lead to acute episodes of inflammation, known as flare ups.
- If you already have a more generalised arthritis, your thumb may be one of several joints affected.
- For many people the thumb is the only problem. It may affect one or both hands.

Symptoms

- Pain – usually felt over and around the joint and in the “fleshy part” of your thumb. The wrist may also ache or be painful.
- The joint may feel hot, swollen, and tender to touch.
- Grip and pinch may be weak, and is also likely to aggravate the pain. You may find you drop things.
- Movement of your thumb may be limited.
- The joint may feel as if it is creaking or grinding.
- Over time, the position of your thumb may change as a result of the wear and tear and changes to your muscles and ligaments



Prominence at the base of the thumb

Treatment

- You may not need any treatment if symptoms are mild.
- If warmth helps to relieve pain and stiffness, exercise your hand in warm water or warm packs may be helpful.
- Cold, such as a pack of frozen peas, may help hot, swollen joints. **(Do not use unless you are specifically advised to do so)**
- Using adapted equipment such as jar openers or pen grips can help relieve stress and strain on the joint while using your hand. Your Occupational Therapist will advise you on this.
- Exercises may help to stabilise the thumb and slow down progression.

If symptoms are more severe, you may be referred to Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy.

- The **Occupational Therapist** may manufacture a splint to help stabilise and support the joint whilst using your hand. They may also assess your daily activities and suggest alternate ways of doing these to try and limit pain.
- The **Physiotherapist** may be able to carry out a variety of treatments to help decrease pain, swelling and stiffness, and may teach you exercises to increase the movement and strength in your thumb

It is likely that a combination of the above management techniques may help to control your symptoms, although they will not “remove the arthritis”. In more advanced cases where pain and stiffness interfere with daily activities, your doctor may offer you a joint injection, which could also help to relieve pain.

In the long term, if symptoms remain and interfere with your daily activities, surgery is also possible.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Hand Therapy Units

Royal Liverpool Hospital

Tel: 0151 706 2760

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2760

Broadgreen Hospital

Tel: 0151 282 6276

Text phone number: 18001 0151 282 6276

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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