

Common symptoms of carpometacarpal osteoarthritis (CMC OA)

Pain

Usually a sharp pain on movement or aching pain at the base of the thumb. The pain is worse with movements and better with rest.

Reduced grip strength

Difficulty with picking up objects or gripping them.

Stiffness

Worse after periods of rest, generally first thing in the morning.

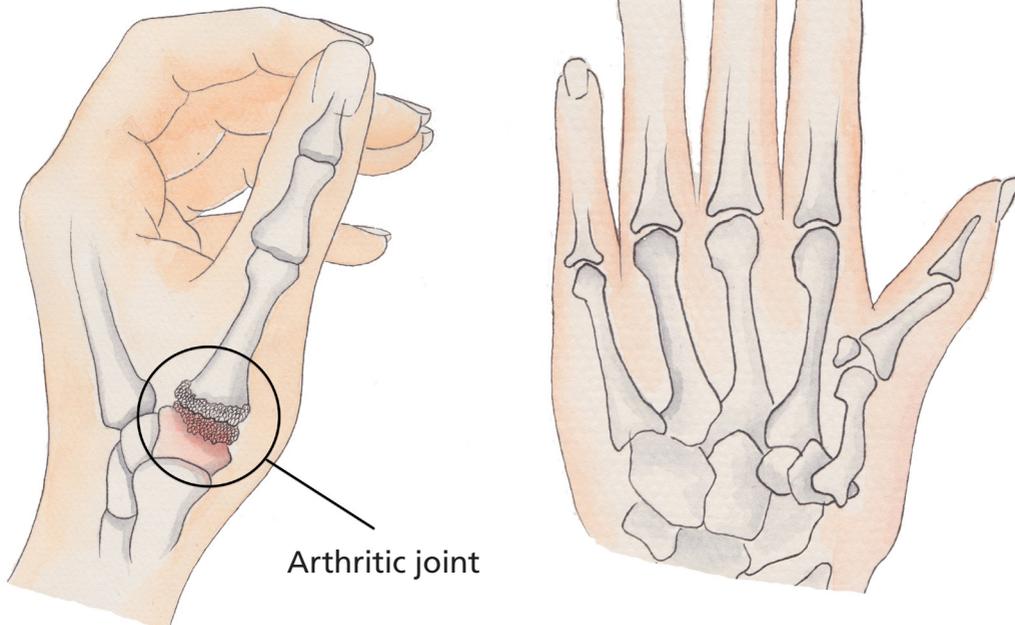
Swelling

Around the base of the thumb.

Deformity

In the later stages of the condition the thumb joints can collapse inwards.

Common symptoms of CMC OA



Treatment of (CMC OA)

Exercises



1. Rest your hand on a table stretch your thumb away from your hand. **Repeat 10 times.**



2. Rest your little finger on a table and stretch your thumb away from your hand. **Repeat 10 times**



3. Touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of each finger. **Repeat 10 times**



4. Touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of your index finger. Link both hands together and gently pull apart resisting the movement. Hold for 5 seconds. **Repeat 10 times**



5. Support under the bottom joint of your thumb. Bend the tip of the thumb and lift up from the bottom joint of the thumb. **Repeat 10 times.** Progress to resisting with an elastic band

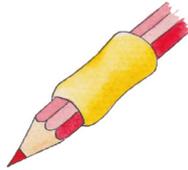
Assistive devices

There are a variety of aids that can assist in tasks that you find painful for your thumb.

Wide grip cutlery



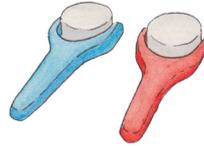
Pen grips



Jar openers



Tap Turners



Joint Protection

It is important that when you get pain into the thumb joint while doing activities that you look at different ways that you could do that activity without causing too much stress onto the joint.

For example:

- Using your pinch grip eg writing, opening clothes pegs.
Keep the top joint of the thumb bent and the wrist extended
- Activities that involve turning and twisting eg keys in a lock, turning taps, jar tops.

Avoid fully straightening the top joint of the thumb and the thumb crossing in front of the palm

Other useful tips on joint protection:

- Spread the load over several joints
Carry items on 2 flat hands rather than gripping with your thumb
- Use larger stronger joints
This takes the strain off your thumb
- Use less effort
Push or slide heavy items rather than carrying them

Splints to support the CMC joint

Splints are designed to be worn when doing activities that aggravate your thumb pain. They help to reduce the pain that you feel and protect the joint from further damage. It is important that you don't wear the splint for all activities as they can cause some of the muscles to become weak. Light functional activities should be completed without the splint.



You should not wear the splint when driving or operating heavy machinery as it will restrict the movements of your hand.

Thumb spica/splints can be bought in most chemists or on the internet.

Pain relief

Some people find that paracetamol or anti-inflammatory medications can help to reduce the pain. This should be discussed with your GP as they can advise you on what medication and dosage is right for you.

If the pain cannot be controlled with oral pain relief, splinting and exercises, then a corticosteroid injection can be offered. This will provide temporary pain relief so it is easier to complete the exercises.

Surgery

If your symptoms cannot be adequately controlled with conservative measures then surgery can be an option. All conservative measures should be tried before you consider surgery. The most common procedure is a trapeziectomy where the arthritic bone is removed. This is then followed by a period of splinting and physiotherapy to regain the function of the hand.