

Orthopaedic Connection

The Amazing Human Hand

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

As an Orthopaedic Surgeon I have been involved in the care of hands my whole professional life. In some places plastic surgeons also provide hand care. Mostly the hand and wrist is the province of Orthopaedic Surgeons such as myself. In large cities there are a few Orthopaedic Surgeons who have finished their traditional Orthopaedic Surgery residency as I did at the Cleveland Clinic and have taken further training to become "hand surgery specialist".

While I take care of the great majority of hand problems and injuries that come my way, these "super specialist" doctors are a valuable resource for me and my patients for very unusual or difficult cases.

An Incredible Instrument

Consider the versatility of the hand. It can perform an infinite variety of tasks. The hand can write, play a violin and paint a picture. The hand can also lift and carry heavy loads, build things, box and do karate.

How Does The Hand Do This?

It can do this because it is ridiculously complicated! The bones of the hand and wrist allow for a combination of great mobility and strength. There are eight bones in the wrist and nineteen in the hand. In one hand and wrist there are 27 bones. In the whole body there are only 204 bones.

This arrangement allows for a near universal joint at the wrist.

Anatomy

I'm really trying not to get too technical!

- Innumerable little joints between all these 27 hand and wrist bones.
- They all must move and slide together.
- Big muscles that move the hand are in the forearm.
- Many tendons connect these muscles to the bones.
- In the hand there are also a large number of smaller muscles that add further delicacy and movement.
- Add in dozens of nerves, arteries and veins.

Key Tools

Your hands are really key tools used in every daily activity. Besides the development of the human brain over millions of years, the next most amazing thing is the development of the thumb which over time has become opposite the four fingers. It allows us to do all the things we do. Try to do things with your hand without using your thumb to oppose the fingers!

Well, you can scratch, swing on a branch and hold a banana pretty well. Probably couldn't do Orthopaedic Surgery, though. See what I mean. The thumb is the key.

Injuries

I have seen it all. I am convinced there are a limitless number of things my patients can do to injure their hands. From an injury standpoint I'd have to say hands top the list. People will never stop punching walls and breaking bones, getting bitten by their cat or cutting off fingers with power tools.

- Lacerations of nerves, blood vessels, tendons
- Infections
- Crush injuries
- The list is endless

Hand Diseases

There are a huge number of things that can affect the hand besides trauma and injury. Such things as arthritis, carpal tunnel, tumors, ganglions, congenital problems, infections and so much more.

Time to stop and re-group. I am going to eventually get into how I treat most of these problems so please keep coming to class. There is much more to learn.

Office Website - Gratiot County Herald Archive

www.orthopodsurgeon.com and Your Orthopaedic Connection are your source for all things Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal. You reach the GCH Archive of all previous articles through the website. All past articles are listed by title and the complete text is available at a click of the mouse.

All of this information pertains to everything I treat at the office and hospital. Please log on and check it out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush