

# A workout to protect your thumbs

October 22 2019, by Len Canter

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The range of motion of the human thumb makes so many everyday hand movements possible. Whether you're an athlete gripping sports equipment, a baker whisking egg whites or a do-it-yourselfer hammering

a nail, you'd be at a total loss without your thumbs. Yet most people do little to protect these overlooked but essential digits.

First, be aware of the common ways you can injure your thumbs. At the top of the list is overuse from texting and playing video games. Putting out your hand to cushion a fall is another cause. So is over-extending the thumbs when you're playing tennis and when you're skiing, typically when you fall if your hands get caught in your poles.

To prevent problems, take steps to avoid overuse injuries and condition your thumbs just as you would any other body part.

Give your thumbs a rest from texting by using your [index fingers](#) and/or the voice feature on your phone and other gadgets.

Do daily stretches to improve range-of-motion and flexibility, like thumb extensions and flexions.

With your palm up and fingers together, first extend your thumb out to the side to make a 90-degree angle with your hand, then cross your thumb over your open palm toward the base of your pinkie and hold for 10 seconds.

Next, open and close your fingers in a fist.

Finally do wrist circles, moving your wrist clockwise five times and then counterclockwise. Aim for 10 reps of each stretch and repeat a few times each day.

**More information:** The Rush University Medical Center has more [tips](#) to protect your thumbs.

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