



UPPER HAND

Giving you the upper hand on upper extremity care.

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As we turn the corner of a long winter and head into the warmer months of spring and summer, we are presented with a variety of potential injuries to hands and arms. I had considered discussing the wrist fractures associated with roller-blading and skateboarding. I also thought to warn of hand injuries associated with gardening. No, not this time. I feel compelled to warn of hand injuries that result from fireworks.

I realize this newsletter will be arriving at your home in early May. The Fourth of July seems so distant, but this is an injury that can be avoided with ongoing education. So, bear with me as I climb on my soapbox. I ask you to spread the word to those around you.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their positive feedback about this newsletter. It has apparently been well received and your remarks are filtered back to me. Of course, I welcome any comment. If there is a specific topic you would like to see discussed, please let me know.

We have new additions to our newsletter. The first is a five-part series, *Meet the Physicians*. This will let you know a little more about your own physician or one of our other specialists.

Anyone that has been through either Hand and Microsurgery Associates or Columbus Hand Therapy has probably had to learn to function one-handed for even a brief time. It was suggested that the patients could offer suggestions of what they found to make that experience easier. Suggestions will be placed in a new column, "*Hand*"-y tips from our patients. This will appear only when I have suggestions given to me by patients either by phone, email, or in speaking with me. Be sure to include your name so you get credit.

Let us welcome the change in seasons and the color and wonder that is Ohio in the spring. Be safe!

Tammy Stoshak, R.N., C
Hand Coordinator
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If you are interested in sharing your story with others through our newsletter, feel free to contact me.

Fireworks Safety

Although fireworks are often a traditional part of a celebration, especially Independence Day, they are also a source of injuries. According to the US Consumer Products Safety Commission, 8500 people in the US are treated each year for fireworks related injuries.

Who gets injured?

- Males represent 72% of all injuries.
- More than 40% of those injured are children younger than 14. Sparklers were associated with the most injuries for children under 5.
- The most frequently and most seriously injured are active participants in fireworks related activities, not bystanders and audience members.
- Fireworks-related injuries most frequently involve the hands and fingers (38%)
- About half of the injuries are burns, especially to the face, hand, wrist, or arm.
- Fireworks-related injuries are most commonly associated with firecrackers (51%), bottle rockets (12%), and sparklers (7%).

The best way to prevent fireworks-related injuries is to leave the fireworks displays to the trained professionals. The US Consumer Products Safety Commission and the National Council of Fireworks Safety have issued these tips:

- Do not let children under 14 use fireworks and supervise older children.
- Buy only from reliable fireworks sellers; read and follow all of the warnings and instruction, **use only in states where legal**.
- Use fireworks outdoors only; keep them away from houses and flammable materials.
- Have a bucket of water nearby.
- DO NOT try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak them in water and throw them away.
- Be sure other people are a safe distance away before lighting fireworks.
- Never ignite fireworks in a container--especially glass or metal.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place according to their specific storage instructions.
- Never experiment or attempt to make your own fireworks.
- Do not wear loose clothing while using fireworks.
- Sparklers need to be handled carefully too: they burn at more than 1000°F. Light them one at a time at arm's length. Always wear gloves while holding a sparkler, and **never** give one to a child under 5 years of age.
- Educate children (of all ages) about the dangers of fireworks and teach them to practice safety at all time.

Patient Story: Paul Poppel

Over the past 20+ months, there has frequently been a smiling face at Columbus Hand Therapy. It is difficult to tell by the smile all of the challenges that have faced Paul Poppel since his accident at work on June 10, 2005. On that night, his right hand was pulled into an industrial auger and his life would never be the same.

Paul met Dr. Kobus early in the morning of June 11th. They chatted as they waited for Paul's wife, Cheryl, to make it to Columbus and locate them in the hospital. Paul tells me he asked Dr. Kobus if he would be back to work in a couple of weeks! Dr. Kobus informed Paul it would be a bit longer than that. The run-in with the auger had caused a severe injury from his forearm through his fingers. Also, he had stretched the ligaments up to his elbow and damaged the tendons on the back of his arm that allows him to straighten his fingers.

It has been many surgeries, with the final surgery not yet scheduled. Throughout the progression of surgeries, there have been minor setbacks. Because of the restricted motion of his elbow, his limited shoulder activity resulted in a frozen shoulder. But, the smile never faded. Paul continued to remain optimistic about his ability to progress with his rehabilitation. It has also been over 200 sessions in therapy, generally with Denise Gravois as his Hand Therapist. Throughout the entire process, everyone that has met Paul comments on his constant smile.

Paul credits his wife and members of his church, Urbana Methodist Church, for strength and support throughout this ordeal. There was always an endless list of church members offering to drive him when he was not able. Also, every additional surgery meant

a few more weeks of restrictive driving. Paul's children; Wesley, Markley, and Becca, have also been there to support him.



Paul described times early in his rehabilitation process when he would notice other patients using different machines. He mentioned that he would watch people working on the BTE and wonder if he would ever progress to that level of function. Paul is almost independent on that machine now, changing the attachments as he challenges himself through the exercises. His therapist, Denise, mentioned that by the time Paul will graduate from Columbus Hand Therapy, every joint in his right arm will have been rehabilitated--“from the shoulder to the fingertips”.

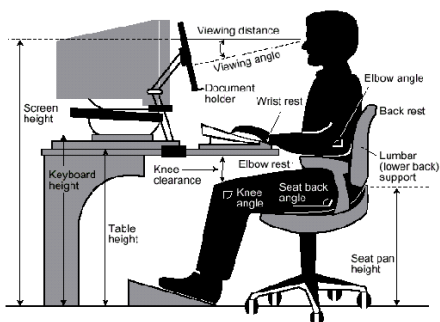
As with many of the patients that are treated at Columbus Hand Therapy, there seems to be a support system among them. There are patients on a similar schedule and they know each other's story. They cheer each other on as they strive toward a new level in their rehabilitation process. As staff, we can only stand back and marvel at how patients with such different injuries and different rehabilitation needs can all work together.

It has been almost two years since Paul Poppel came to meet Dr. Kobus and Denise. It will still be a while before he is able to discontinue his drives to Columbus. Through it all, Paul has touched many lives with his smile. Paul, we wish you the best.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Hand therapists often see patients with overuse injuries. Overuse injuries are those that occur microscopically over day, weeks, or even months. Overuse injuries often result in damage in the area where the elastic muscle tissue is joined to the stiffer tendinous tissue, resulting in tendonitis. Another type of overuse injury results in pressure of a nerve, such as ulnar nerve compression at the inside of the elbow (Cubital Tunnel Syndrome) or median nerve compression at the wrist (Carpal Tunnel Syndrome). In these cases there may not be a known source of injury. It is important for the patient and therapist to try to pinpoint a possible cause, so the patient doesn't experience a reinjury.

Overuse injuries often occur while spending time on a computer. With computers involved in more occupations and more people using them daily at home, it is useful to consider safe biomechanical alignment when setting up a computer workstation. The following guidelines describe the ideal set-up:



- Line the head over the neck and shoulders
- Support the lumbar curve of the lower back
- With arms along the sides of the body, elbows should be bent 90 degrees
- Wrists should be straight, and benefit from a support
- Hips should be slightly higher than knees, with knees bent approximately 90 degrees
- Feet should be supported on the floor or foot rest

Equipment set-up:

To achieve the biomechanical alignment above, start with the desk or work station and measure the height from the surface to the floor. Add 2 inches to account for the keyboard. This is the measurement from the bent elbow to the floor when seated in the computer chair. This might require raising the chair to its maximum height, or it may mean that your knees are almost hitting the desk. If your feet don't touch the floor when knees are bent 90 degrees, add a foot rest. There are commercially available angled foot rests. A phone book or small box can also work.

With the low back supported by the chair and the hands positioned over the keys, the next thing to consider is head and neck alignment. In order to avoid slouching, the monitor has to be in the right spot. The right spot has a lot to do with vision and corrective eyewear. Ideally the monitor should be straight ahead versus off the side. The screen should be at a comfortable viewing distance from the eye, generally 24-30". The height of the monitor should be determined by aligning the eye level one-third of the way down the screen. This assures the rest of the screen can be viewed by looking down with the eyes, without needing to move

the head. Those with bifocals will need the monitor lower if they need to look down through their glasses. There are static or adjustable monitor stands that can be used to achieve the correct height and varied for multiple users of the same work station.

Once proper work station alignment is achieved, pay attention to function. Changes in work that require repetitive mousing or tabbing, for example, can result in overuse of a tendon or possible nerve compression. Be sure to rest the fingers lightly over the keys or mouse versus holding the fingers elevated between strokes. Avoid weight bearing at the wrist and pivoting from that point. It's better to use the larger muscles of the arm to glide the mouse. Even the "ideal" position is not ideal for a long period of time. Take breaks to stretch forearm muscles, realign head over shoulders and focus on a distant object to give eyes a rest. Be aware of aching or fatigue that begins to occur and give it a rest before it results in an injury.

Cydney Philbin
Physical Therapist
Certified Hand Therapist

MEET THE PHYSICIANS



He comes to the rescue following injury or wear,
But how did he get here? This man of no fear.

As a lad, he was raised in the Queen City down south,
He was pleasant, not boastful, no ne'r a big mouth.

On to northeast Ohio for college, Med School,
He realized "Hand Surgery" to pursue would be cool.

Paul A. Cook, M.D.

His next training took place with the Scarlet and Gray.
He was focused, devoted--never pausing to stray.

He moved on to train, his next stop Baltimore,
His Fellowship meant many limbs to explore.

Returning to Columbus, he settled right in,
At Hand and Microsurgery the real life would begin.

His education not stopping, on to the Orthopedic Board.
Then a CAQ of the Hand was to be his next reward.

His interests include traumatic elbow repair
And arthroscopy--which he performs with such flair.

His patients, they love him! "He has changed my life."
He knows what to do with some suture and knife.

So if you've been injured and you're feeling forsook,
Look for the talented man we all know, Doctor Cook.

HAND THERAPY AWARENESS & INJURY PREVENTION WEEK

June 11-15,2007

Join us as we celebrate the staff of Columbus Hand Therapy during Hand Therapy Awareness & Injury Prevention Week. Identified by the American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT), this week serves to bring the benefits of the hand therapy profession to new audiences--demonstrating the advantages of preventative as well as treatment procedures for patients who may have been affected by an accident or trauma.



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