

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

★ "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II COR. 3:17 ★ 50 CENTS ★ STATE EDITION

HEALTHYLIVING

SECTION E • THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR • TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2008 • INDYSTAR.COM/HEALTH

Four ways ...

to avoid BlackBerry thumb

Hand aching? The culprit could be your BlackBerry.

Nationally, about 2.5 million people use a BlackBerry, more than double last year's number. As the number of users rises, more are experiencing carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis due to overuse — a condition called "BlackBerry thumb," says orthopedic surgeon Arthur Rettig of Methodist Sports Medicine/The Orthopedic Specialists.

"Many people are experiencing repetitive stress injury, causing pain and sometimes numbness in the thumbs and joints in the hand, due to spending far too much time composing e-mails and accessing the Internet on hand-held devices," he said.

To reduce discomfort and potential long-term damage, Dr. Rettig offers the following advice:

1 TAKE FREQUENT BREAKS: The repetitive motion causes harm to nerves, so after 15 or 20 minutes, get up and perform a different activity to allow hand muscles and joints to rest.

2 WRITE FEWER AND SHORTER MESSAGES: Learn to abbreviate responses. If you need to send longer messages, use a full-size keyboard.



3 ADOPT A NEUTRAL GRIP: Use a grip that allows your wrists to remain upright and straight and refrain from slouching while using a BlackBerry. Place the BlackBerry on a briefcase or use a support in your lap to reduce strain.

4 AVOID THUMB-TYPING: When possible, alternate typing between fingers. If your thumbs or hands hurt, pay attention and cut back the typing. If the pain worsens, especially if it's hard to do

other things with your hands or if you have numbness or tingling, see an orthopedic specialist. For more information, visit www.methodistsports.com.

— Barb Berggoetz