



LaBorde Therapy Center
Occupational & Physical Therapy Services
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Get a Grip on Hand Therapy Prevention

Hand Therapy Awareness & Injury Prevention Week is June 9-13

CHICAGO, IL, April 18, 2008 – The American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT) is sponsoring **Hand Therapy Awareness & Injury Prevention Week**, June 9-13, in an effort to increase recognition of the benefits of **Hand Therapy** and the importance of injury prevention.

During the week of June 9-13, ASHT will be joined by hand therapists and healthcare professionals around the country in raising awareness of how **Hand Therapy** helps patients recover from injury or trauma every day. **Hand Therapy Awareness & Injury Prevention Week** is celebrated through community and local media outreach, promotional events at local clinics, partnerships with hand surgeons and hospitals, dissemination of information to patients and special recognition of hand therapists at clinics, among other efforts.

“The importance of **Hand Therapy** cannot be understated,” says ASHT President Paige E. Kurtz, MS, OTR/L, CHT. “The specialized care hand therapists provide is critical to the recovery and healing process. It’s important for those suffering from hand injuries or trauma to understand the role **Hand Therapy** plays in their ability to fully recover. It’s equally important that everyone is aware of the risks of hand injuries and how to greatly reduce those risks.”

Through the treatment of the hand and upper extremity, hand therapists enhance the lives of patients by restoring functional activity through specialized skills in assessment and treatment. Either physical or occupational therapists, hand therapists achieve their specialization through extra training and experience. Additionally, therapists can obtain the Certified Hand Therapist (CHT) designation with a minimum of five years of clinical experience and by meeting the necessary requirements.

Hand Therapists specialize not only in treating injuries, but prevention as well. As part of **Hand Therapy Awareness & Injury Prevention Week**, ASHT encourages the public to take extra caution and be aware of everyday activities which could lead to hand or upper extremity ailments. In conjunction with the June 9-13 awareness week, the Society has posted a series of injury prevention tips and guidelines, covering activities such as gardening, cooking and playing video games. Visit www.asht.org and click on “**Hand Therapy Awareness & Injury Prevention Week**” to view the tips and for additional information.

The following are a sample of the professionally-designed guidelines for the use of handheld electronics and portable devices. From MP3 players to cell phones to portable video games, you can’t walk down the street without seeing someone immersed in the world of handheld

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electronics. The repetitive use of these items can result in injuries that can be prevented by adhering to these tips:

- **If you have pain during the activity, stop.** Pain is one of the ways your body is letting you know that you are overextending a particular muscle group.
- **Use a neutral grip when holding the device.** A neutral grip is when the wrist is straight, not bent in either direction. It allows for wrist motion in a plane where more motion is available in the wrist.
- **Take a break every few minutes or switch to another activity.** Overuse of repetitive motions, such as pressing buttons, can cause tendonitis of the elbow or lead to Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (tendon or nerve irritation).
- **If possible, place pillows in your lap and rest arms on pillows or use the device supported on a desk or tabletop.** This allows you to keep your head in a more upright position and therefore decrease neck strain. The pillows or desk help support the arms so they do not have to be held up in the air.
- **Sit in an appropriate chair.** This is a chair that allows you to put your feet comfortably on the floor and also provides good back support.
- **Switch hands frequently** and vary the use of fingers/ digits. This allows the one hand or other fingers/digits to rest and reduce fatigue.
- **Frequently look away from the screen and focus on a distant object** to help reduce eye fatigue.

For more information about **Hand Therapy** Awareness & Injury Prevention Week, hand injury prevention techniques or to find a professional hand therapist in your area, visit **www.asht.org**.

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*The American Society of Hand Therapists is a not-for-profit organization seeking to advance the specialty of **Hand Therapy** through communication, education, research and the establishment of clinical standards. ASHT's 3,300 members in the United States, Canada and around the world strive to be recognized leaders in the **Hand Therapy** profession.*