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iPod Thumb, the new occupational hazard

Prolonged wheel use can lead to thumb and wrist problems

Occupational hazards are no laughing matter, and while tennis players have their elbows, housemaids their knees and athletes their feet, iPod users are beginning to have their thumbs. That's right, doctors are beginning to talk of iPod-thumb. This condition is said to be caused by the hand movements that are required to work the wheel in order to navigate the long lists of songs and artists. According to Carl Irwin, from the British Chiropractic Association, "the action needed to move the wheel on an iPod is totally unnatural and effectively separates the joint in the thumb every time you use it." Jumping around through the 10,000 tracks on your Pod can be risky if you do it too often. The iPod is only the latest and perhaps one of the most famous hand-held devices to be pointed out for causing repetitive stress injury (RSI). "Hand-held electronics may require prolonged grips, repetitive motion on small buttons and awkward wrist movements. This combination can lead to hand, wrist and arm ailments such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis. These devices are getting smaller with even more features, which encourage heavy, extended use. More of the population could suffer hand ailments unless they learn to take preventative measures," said Donna Stanton, of the US Society of Hand Therapists. While this might seem as overreacting to some people, many users of such miniaturized devices are children who are at risk of storing up joint problems for when they grow up. Doctors are by no means against the Pod, as long as care is taken in operating it for extended periods of time. They recommend holding the pod in one hand and navigating with the other, or making use of the play list and shuffle functions.