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THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, PHYSICAL THERAPISTS ADVISE PARENTS TO BE AWARE OF INJURIES CAUSED BY OVERUSE OF VIDEO GAMES

ALEXANDRIA, VA, December 19, 2006. Children who receive the must-have gifts of the holiday season, Sony's™ PlayStation 3 or Microsoft's™ Xbox 360, may get something that they didn't wish for -- sore thumbs and hands -- says the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).

"Video Gamer's Thumb" is a very real condition that can have long-term effects on children's hands and upper arms if they don't take proper precautions, says Cindy Miles, PT, MEd, PCS, owner of a pediatrics physical therapy private practice in Whitehall, PA. Continued stress on tendons, nerves, and ligaments in children's hands and arms can lead to long-term consequences such as tendinitis, bursitis, and carpal tunnel syndrome, explains Miles.

"Video Gamer's Thumb" refers to a repetitive stress injury (RSI) that causes swelling at the base of the thumb due to overuse of video games. RSI is an umbrella term for a collection of disorders most commonly affecting the hands, wrists, forearms, and shoulders, notes Miles. She adds that symptoms can range from fatigue and loss of strength to minor or acute aches and pains, burning, and tingling.

To protect against injuries, APTA also recommends the following:

- **Keep wrists straight; do not let them bend downward** when holding a game controller.
- **Practice good posture** while playing. Sit in a chair that provides solid back support with feet comfortably on the floor.
- **Stretch and move.** Remember to stretch and get up and move every 20 minutes for so to give head, neck, and shoulder muscles a break.
- **Watch for problems.** Look for warning signs such as headaches, fatigue, muscle pain or cramping and suggest a break or alternate activity.

The American Physical Therapy Association (www.apta.org) is a national professional organization representing nearly 70,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students.

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