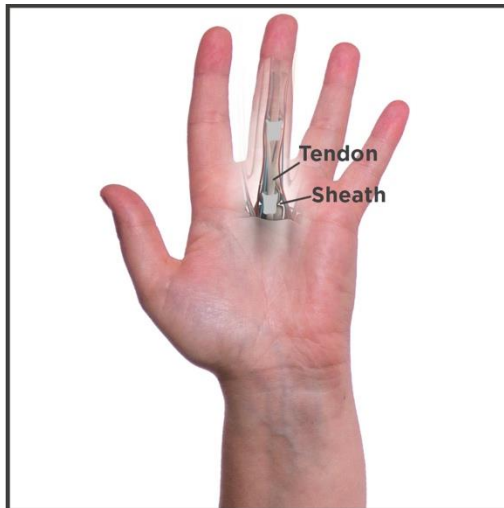


Trigger Finger/Thumb

What is it?

Trigger finger/thumb is a condition where the finger 'clicks' or 'triggers' on bending and straightening. The fingers are pulled by flexor tendons that run to the tip of the finger through tunnels made by ligaments in the finger called a tendon sheath – like ropes and pulleys. In trigger finger, the tendon sheath thickens and the increase friction with the tendons causes the finger to catch on the tunnel, thus producing the characteristic 'triggering' of the finger (1).



Symptoms and signs of trigger finger include:

- Pain at the site of triggering at the base of the finger or thumb
- Tenderness over the site of triggering
- Clicking of the finger on movement. The finger or thumb may also be locked in a bent position which needs to be straightened by the other hand.

Causes of Trigger Finger

The exact cause of trigger finger is unknown but there are some factors that place you at a higher risk of developing trigger finger such as (2):

- Being female
- Diabetes
- Being between 40 to 50 years of age
- Having a previous hand injury

What are the treatment options available?

Nonoperative treatments include:

1. Activity modification – if possible, avoid the activity that causes pain.

2. Splinting – a splint that helps to keep the finger straight, this is particularly useful at night.
3. Corticosteroid injections – a small amount of steroid and local anaesthetic can be injected into the triggering area to reduce pain. Research has shown this to be effective with low risk of side effects (3).

Surgery is offered to those where nonoperative treatment has failed. The surgery, known as a trigger finger release, is where a small cut is made at the palm at the base of the finger near the site of triggering. The tendon sheath is cut to release the pressure on the tendon and allow the tendon to move smoothly (1).

The surgery is often day as a day-case and under local anaesthetic (numbing injections into the hand while the patient stays awake). Other forms of anaesthesia can be discussed if requested.

After the operation, you will have a bulky dressing on, which will be changed after 3-5 days in the outpatients setting, and a referral to the hand therapist for early rehabilitation will be made. It is vital that

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you keep your wound dry while it heals. The sutures used to close the wound will need to be removed in 10-14 days . Furthermore

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

How long will recovery from surgery take?

After the surgery, you should notice an immediate improvement in symptoms. Some patients may notice pain in the hand for the first 2 to 3 days after the operation, but your finger should move more comfortably. We advise just regular over-the-counter painkillers, such as paracetamol. You may require a referral to the hand therapist for range of motion and strengthening exercises but this is unlikely.

When can I drive/return to work?

With regards to driving, you should only drive once your wound has fully healed and you can fully control the wheel and the car. This may take up to 6 to 7 weeks.

You can work once you feel your hand is ready for it, although this may vary according to your job. For desk-based jobs, you may be able to return to work after a few days but for heavy duties e.g. using

machinery, lifting heavy objects, this may take up to 6 weeks before you can return to work.

References

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3. Meyboom-de Jong B. Corticosteroid injection for trigger finger in adults. [cited 2022 Jul 6]; Available from: https://core.ac.uk/reader/148226770?utm_source=linkout