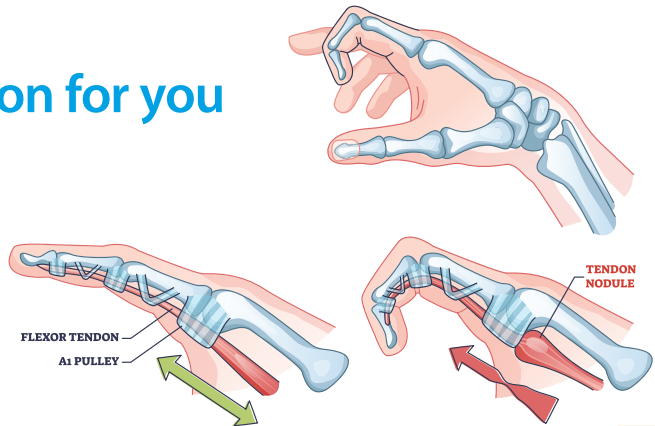




Trigger finger/ thumb


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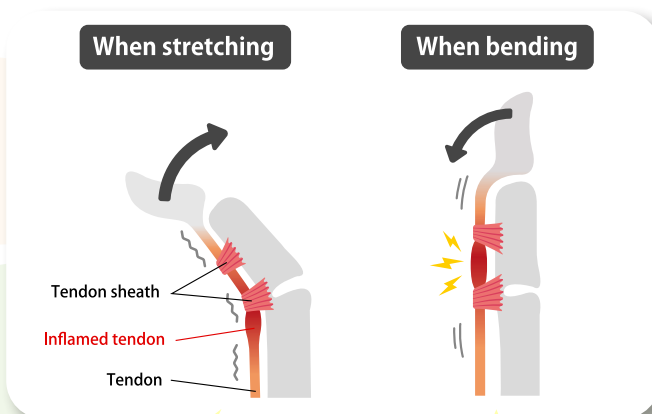


What is it?

Trigger finger is a condition in which a finger(s) or thumb clicks or locks as it is bent towards the palm. Thickening of the tendon tunnel/sheath which overlies the tendon leads to roughness of the tendon surface and the tendon then catches in the tunnel mouth.

What is the cause?

Triggering often happens for no known reason. It can occasionally occur after an injury such as a knock on your hand. People with insulin-dependent diabetes are prone to triggering, but most trigger digits occur in people without diabetes. There is little evidence that triggering is caused by work activities, but pain can be aggravated by hand use at work, at home, in the garden or when participating in sport. Triggering is sometimes due to tendon nodules in people known to have rheumatoid arthritis. It is not caused or related to osteoarthritis.



What are the symptoms?

- Pain at the site of triggering in the palm (fingers) or on the palm surface of the thumb at the middle joint. Usually in a person over the age of 40.
- Tenderness if you press on the site of pain.
- Clicking of your digit during movement, or locking in a bent position, often worse on waking in the morning. Your digit may need to be straightened with the pressure from the opposite hand.
- Stiffness, especially in trigger thumb where movement at the end joint is reduced.

Trigger finger/thumb myths versus facts

Myth:

Everyone with trigger finger needs an operation.

Fact:

The majority of trigger finger/thumb respond well to steroid injection and most do not require surgery.

What is the treatment for trigger finger or thumb?

Trigger finger and trigger thumb are not harmful but can be a real nuisance. Some mild cases recover over a few weeks without treatment. The options for treatment are:

Splints for trigger finger/thumb

Sometimes keeping your finger in a straight position during the night can allow irritation of the tendon to settle. You may have worked out yourself that keeping your hand flat under the pillow is helpful.

A home-made splint using a lollipop stick held on with tape can be helpful. There are also some simple splints available online like the one below. Unfortunately these are not something that are routinely issued by your family doctor (GP). We are not suggesting you should buy this, we are simply giving you options which may be helpful.



Steroid injection

- Steroid injection relieves the pain and triggering in about 70% of cases, but the success rate is lower in people with diabetes. The risks of injection are small, but can include:
 - Thinning or colour change in the skin at the site of injection.
 - Risk of infection causing swelling, redness and pain.

Improvement may occur within a few days of injection, but may take several weeks. Subsequent injections are sometimes helpful, but surgery may be needed if triggering persists.

Surgery

Surgery is usually only considered when triggering does not resolve with steroid injections. The operation is usually done under local anaesthetic as a day case. The operation involves a small cut at the base of your finger/thumb and the tight strap over the tendon is then released. The wound will require a small dressing and bandage for seven to 12 days. Light use of your hand is possible from the day of your surgery but you are required to keep the wound and dressing clean and dry. It is recommended that you do not drive until your stitches are removed and you feel safe to do so.

Risks of surgery are rare but may include:

- Swelling and joint stiffness in the finger(s)
- Scar thickening and tenderness
- Infection
- Complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS)
- Nerve injury
- Risk of recurrence

Your orthopaedic specialist would discuss this further with you before surgery.

We hope you find the information and suggestions for self-help in this leaflet useful.

Further information about trigger digit/thumb, other hand conditions and general advice on looking after and caring for your hand and wrist is available via the URL link and barcode below.

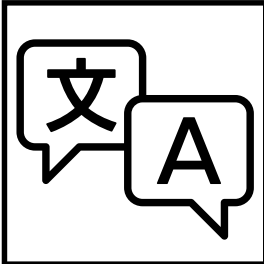
<https://www.nhsaaa.net/musculoskeletal-service-msk/musculoskeletal-service-msk-wrist-hand-entrapment-neuropathy/>

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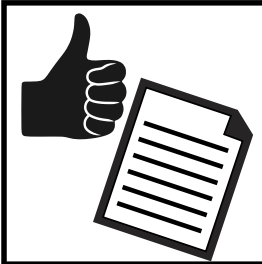
Further information about trigger finger/thumb and other hand conditions can be found on our website.



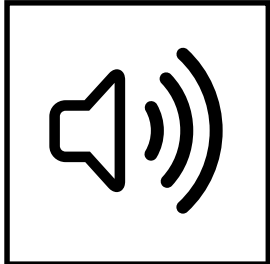
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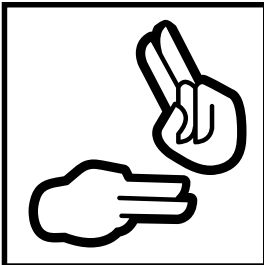
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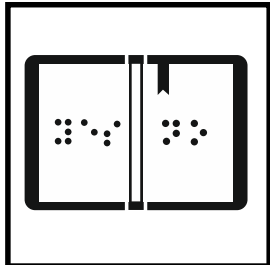
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