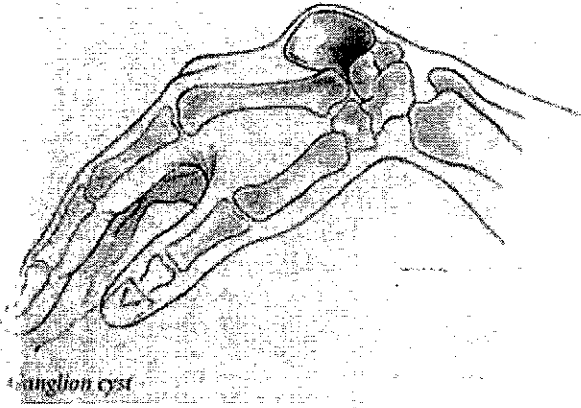


Common Hand Problems

No matter what your age or occupation your hands are always working. Since your hands are so important, any abnormality can be a cause for concern. Many common hand problems that interfere with your daily activities can be diagnosed and treated by your orthopaedic surgeon.

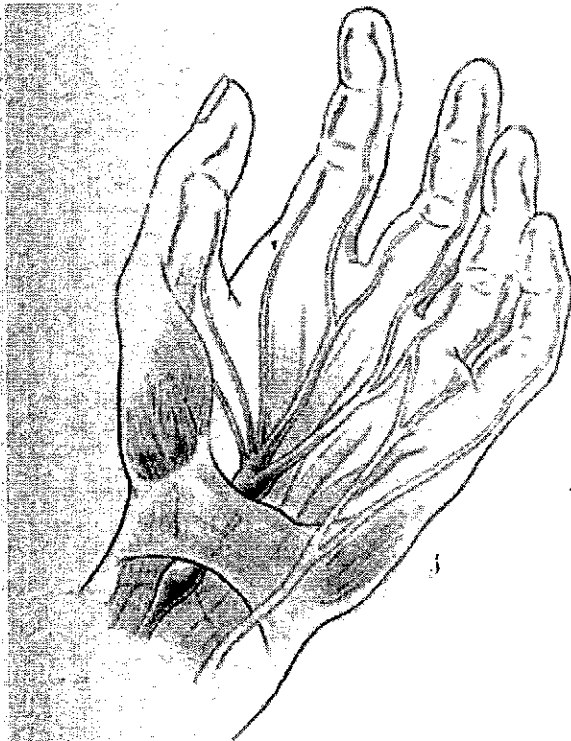
Ganglion Cysts



Ganglion cysts are the most common mass or lump in the hand. They are most common on the back of the wrist. These non-cancerous, fluid-filled cysts arise from the ligaments, joints, or tendon sheaths when they are irritated or inflamed. They can disappear or change size quickly.

Many ganglion cysts do not require treatment. However, if a cyst is painful, interferes with function, or the patient does not like the appearance, your orthopaedic surgeon can remove it with a needle (aspiration) or remove it surgically.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



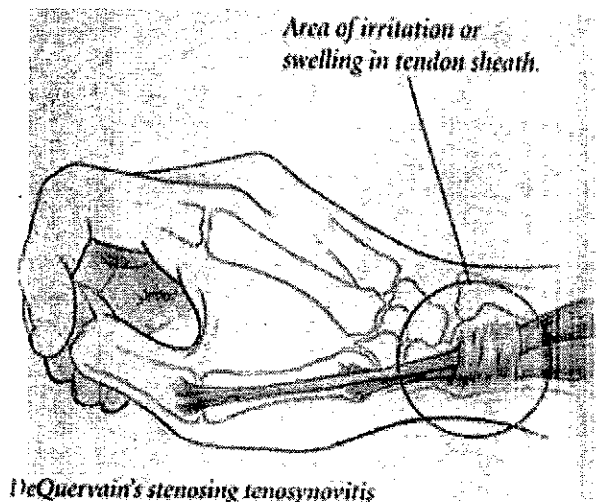
Common symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome are numbness and tingling in the hand, especially at night; pain with prolonged gripping such as holding a steering wheel; or clumsiness when handling objects. Sometimes the pain can go all the way up the shoulder.

These symptoms are caused by pressure on the median nerve as it enters the hand through a tunnel in the wrist. The tendons that bend your fingers and thumb also travel in this tunnel.

Mild cases can be treated with a splint or brace to rest the hand. Steroid injections into the carpal canal to decrease swelling can be used in addition to splinting. Those cases that do not respond to nonsurgical treatment and those that are diagnosed late may require surgery. This is generally done in an outpatient setting under local anesthesia.

Tendonitis of the Wrist

DeQuervain's stenosing tenosynovitis is an irritation and

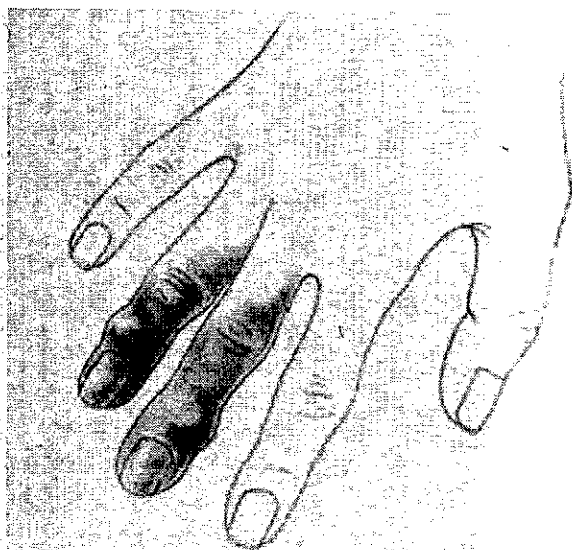


of the sheath or tunnel which surrounds the thumb tendon pass from the wrist to the thumb. Pain when grasping or and tenderness over the tunnel are the most common symptoms. Sometimes a lump or thickening can be felt in this area. The hand is made into a fist with the thumb "tucked in" and bent towards the little finger, the pain gets worse (Finkelstein

Tendonitis may be caused by overuse and also can be associated with pregnancy or inflammatory arthritis such as rheumatoid disease.

If treated early, many cases improve with short periods of splinting, followed by stretching exercises designed to get the tendons gliding. Injection with steroids and/or taking anti-inflammatory medications. More severe cases or those that do not respond to other treatment may require surgery. Modification of the activities which caused the symptoms initially is also often required.

"Wear and Tear" Arthritis of the Hand



Wear and tear arthritis is very common at the base of the thumb and the joints of the fingers. Pain localized to the base of the thumb, particularly with gripping, is a very common early symptom. Early disease can be treated with anti-inflammatory medication, steroid injections into the joints, or splinting.

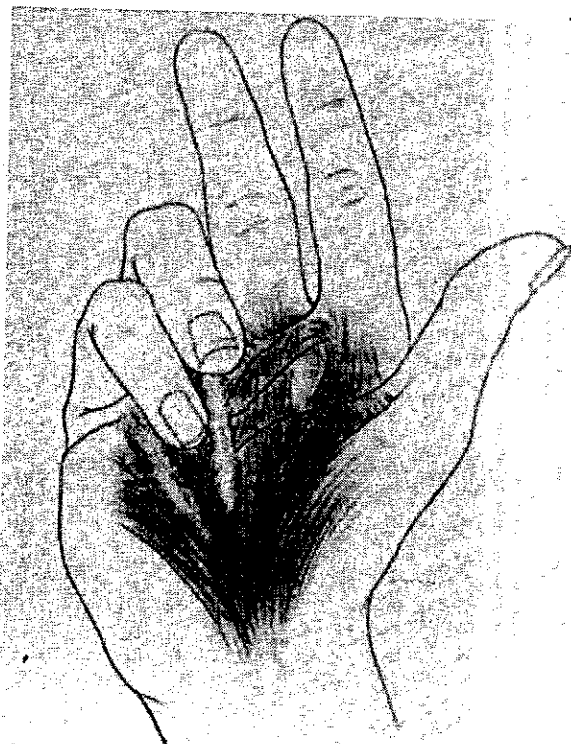
As the wear and deformity progress, surgery is frequently required. There are many procedures to relieve pain and restore function.

Heberden nodes are "bumps" which occur at the last joint of the finger or thumb due to wear and tear arthritis (osteoarthritis). As the joints deteriorate, small bone spurs form over the base of the joints and make them appear "lumpy."

Since most Heberden nodes are not painful and seldom interfere with function, no specific treatment is usually required. If they are painful, they can be treated with anti-inflammatory medication. Patients should continue moving their hands; disuse frequently results in stiffness.

Dupuytren's Contracture

Dupuytren's contracture is a hereditary thickening of the tissue called fascia that lies just below the skin of your palm. This condition may vary from small lumps or bands to very thick bands which may eventually pull the fingers into the palm.

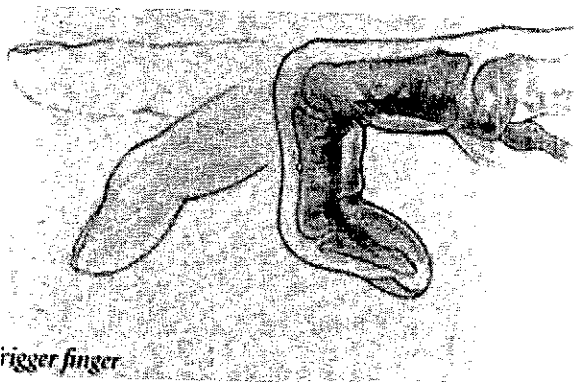


Dupuytren's contracture

Dupuytren's disease is familial, and may be associated with cigarette smoking, vascular disease, epilepsy, and diabetes.

The mainstay of treatment is surgical and is recommended for progressive contracture drawing the fingers into the hand. Sometimes a steroid injection will be used in a painful nodule. Small nodules or lumps in the palm do not need treatment unless they are very large and interfere with hand function. Even after successful surgical removal, the bands may reappear or affect other fingers.

Trigger Finger



Trigger finger

Trigger finger is an irritation of the digital sheath which surrounds the flexor tendons. When the tendon sheath becomes thickened and swollen it pinches the tendon and prevents it from gliding smoothly. In some cases the tendon catches and then suddenly releases as though a "trigger" were released.

Sometimes the swelling can be treated with rest, activity modification, oral anti-inflammatories, or steroid injections. The tendon sheath will then return to its normal, pain-free condition. More severe cases may require surgery to release the tendon. Surgery can be done as an outpatient procedure. Normal activity can be resumed as pain allows.

Your orthopaedist is a medical doctor with extensive training in the diagnosis and nonsurgical and surgical treatment of the musculoskeletal system, including bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles, and nerves.

This brochure has been prepared by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and is intended to provide current information on the subject from recognized authorities. However, it does not represent official policy of the Academy and its text should not be construed as excluding other acceptable viewpoints.