

Information for patients about  
**Trigger Finger**



Hospital: .....

Orthopaedic Clinic: .....

Hand Therapy: .....

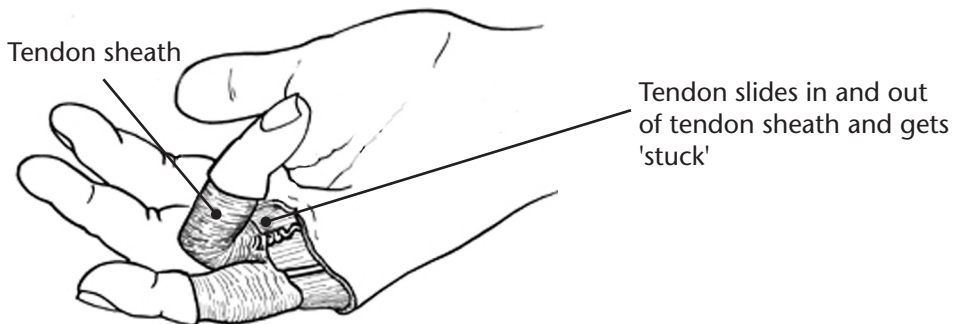
## What is trigger finger?

A trigger finger is a finger that becomes “locked” after being bent (flexed). It may be difficult to straighten it out and you may even have to pull on it with the other hand to release it.



## What causes trigger finger?

The triggering or locking is due to inflammation which causes swelling and thickening of the tendon at the base of the fingers. As you bend and straighten your fingers, normally the tendon slides freely in and out of its tendon cover. In trigger finger, the swelling or inflammation means the tendon may get caught. It can occur in any of the fingers, but most commonly it affects the thumb, middle or ring finger.



Most cases occur for no apparent reason and in healthy people. In some cases it can occur after you have used your hand a lot. Occasionally trigger finger can occur as a feature of another disease e.g. diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or Dupuytren's disease.

## Treatment options

1. **Watch and wait:** If you have mild symptoms, they may clear up on their own.
2. **Relative rest:** Avoiding activities where you have to grip constantly or repeatedly may help.
3. **Splinting:** Wearing a splint overnight that stops the finger bending may help the inflammation settle. This can be fitted by a hand therapist or can be made at home by, for example, taping a lollipop stick to the finger.
4. **Steroid injection:** Steroids work by reducing inflammation. Giving a steroid injection at the base of your finger may reduce the inflammation and the swelling and allow the tendon to move freely again. This helps in about 80% of cases and some people require two injections.

## Surgery

Surgery may be necessary. The surgeon makes a small cut at the base of your finger and the tendon sheath is widened. We use a local anaesthetic which means you are awake.




This surgery has a high success rate. However, you should be aware that even a small surgery such as this carries some risks. These are rare but include wound infection, nerve injury causing numbness or persistent scar tenderness.

## After the surgery

You will return to the clinic approximately 10-12 days after your surgery where we will remove your small dressing and your stitches.

# Hand Therapy

The vast majority of people will not require hand therapy. As soon as you can move your hand you should do the following exercises:

	<p>Start with your wrist and fingers straight. Make a fist Repeat _____ times</p>
	<p>With your thumb touch each fingertip in turn Repeat ____ times.</p>
	<p>Place your palm on the table Spread your fingers and then bring them together Repeat _____ times</p>

## Scar

Once your wound is completely closed and the stitches have been removed, begin massaging your scar and the surrounding area with lotion. Any non perfumed hand cream will be suitable. The massage will help soften your scar, decrease sensitivity and promote healing.

## Returning to normal activities

Once we remove your dressing and your stitches you can return to normal activities (e.g. working and driving) as long as you are moving your hand well. This normally happens very quickly.

## Contact Telephone Number

Nursing support: .....

Hand Therapy support: .....

Diagrams adapted form Physio Tools