

# Trigger finger

This leaflet offers more information about trigger finger. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

## What is trigger finger?

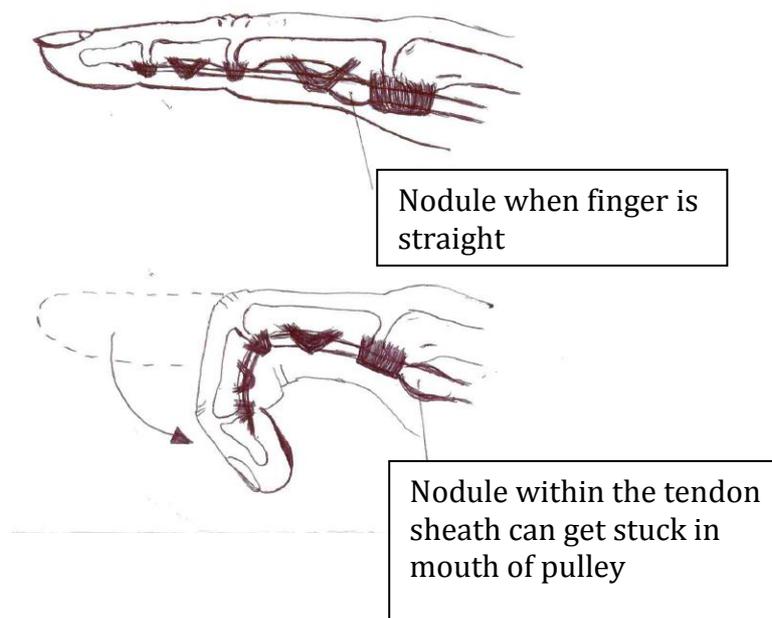
Trigger finger (stenosing tenosynovitis) is a painful condition which affects the tendons in the hand. As the finger or thumb is bent towards the palm, the tendon gets stuck and the finger clicks or locks.

## What are tendons?

Tendons are white, fibrous cords which join muscle to bone. They allow the bone to move when the muscle contracts. In the hand, tendons run along the surface of the bones in the fingers and are attached to the muscles in the forearm.

The tendons are held in place on the bones by a series of ligaments (strong bands of tissue) called pulleys. These are shaped like arches over the tendon, keeping it along the bone. The pulleys combine to form a tunnel, or sheath, along the surface of the bone, through which the tendons slide.

Trigger finger occurs if there is a problem with the tendon or sheath, such as swelling. This sometimes means the tendon can no longer slide easily through the sheath's pulley system and it can become bunched up to form a nodule. This makes it harder to bend the affected finger or thumb. The tendon gets caught in the opening of the pulley and the finger can click painfully as it is straightened.



## Why have I got trigger finger?

Around 2-3% of people develop trigger finger. While the cause of trigger finger is not known, certain factors may increase the likelihood of it developing. For example, it is more common in:

- Females
- People who are over 40 years of age
- People with certain medical conditions, such as diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis.

## How can Hand Therapy help?

If a trigger is diagnosed early, sometimes deep pressure massage may assist to reduce the size of the trigger. Your hand therapist will provide you with information on how to do this safely during your session.

A splint can be made for you to temporarily limit some of the movement in your fingers. This stops the tendon from repeatedly being forced through the pulley and may help to reduce your pain. Mild cases can recover after a few weeks without any treatment; others can re-occur for periods or become a chronic problem.

Your therapist will write any special instructions in the box below:

<p><b>Massage:</b></p>          <p><b>Splint:</b></p>          <p><b>Other instructions:</b></p>          
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## Are there any alternative treatments?

In some cases, people need to be referred to a specialist for a cortisone injection and in some cases may require surgery. Your hand therapist can discuss this with you further if required.

## Useful sources of information

British Society for Surgery of the Hand website:

[http://www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/conditions/18/trigger\\_fingerthumb](http://www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/conditions/18/trigger_fingerthumb)

NHS choices website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Trigger-finger/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about regarding your splint or exercises, please talk to your therapist at your next appointment. If your concerns are more urgent, you can contact the **hand therapy team** on **020 8725 1038** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm). If you have any questions regarding surgical treatment please speak to the consultant's team at your next appointment.

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



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