

Trigger Finger

This leaflet provides 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?

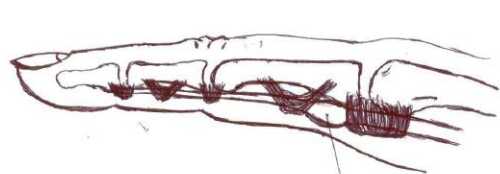
Trigger finger (stenosing tenosynovitis) is a painful condition that affects the tendons in the hand. As the finger or thumb is bent towards the palm, the tendon gets stuck and the finger clicks or locks.

What are tendons?

Tendons are white, fibrous cords at the end of muscles that 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. 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, which 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 finger can click or lock painfully as it is straightened.



Nodule when finger is straight



Nodule within the tendon sheath can get stuck in mouth of pulley

Why have I got trigger finger?

Around two to three per cent 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 within your session today.

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 spontaneously re-occur for periods or become a chronic problem.

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

Massage:

Try to massage over the base of the finger (on the palm side of your hand). It may be useful to use a water based cream to minimise friction. Aim to do this once or twice a day for up to five minutes. You need to use a firm pressure but not so firm that it increases your pain.

Exercises:

This exercise is designed to gently stretch the tendon away from the pulley area in the palm. Make sure you work within the limits of what feels comfortable and don't push into pain.

1. Lay your hand out flat on a table or solid surface.
2. Use your other hand to hold the affected finger.
3. Slowly lift up the finger and keep the rest of your fingers flat.
4. Lift and stretch the finger as high as it will go without straining.
5. Hold it there for a few seconds and release it back down.
6. Try to do one set of five repetitions (you can increase the number of repetitions if it doesn't feel painful)
7. Repeat three times throughout the day.

Splint:

Wear this full time during the day and at night. The more you wear it, the more likely it will help reduce symptoms. It will need to be worn continuously for ____ weeks. It can be removed for hand hygiene.

Other:

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.

Contact us

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this leaflet, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries contact us on the **treatment enquiries** phone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is _____
Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only)
Appointments: 020 8725 0007

Or scan
here



For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

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 wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** 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

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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