

Trigger thumb

Introduction

The aim of this leaflet is to answer some of the questions that you or your child may have about trigger thumb and its treatment. You will also have an opportunity to discuss any further concerns with us in clinic.

What is trigger thumb?

Trigger thumb is a condition seen in young children where the thumb gets stuck in a bent position (flexed) - see picture. This occurs because the tendon that bends the thumb gets stuck in the tunnel, it usually glides freely. If you feel carefully at the base of the thumb you can feel the rucked-up tendon as a nodule (it is the size of a pea). Usually the thumb is able to be straightened to start with but can become fixed. It occurs in both thumbs in about a third of patients.



What is the cause?

We don't know but after screening thousands of newborn babies we know it is not present at birth but appears in the first two years of life.

What is the natural progression?

In infants younger than nine months old, trigger thumb will get better without treatment in about 30% (a third) of cases. In thumbs that don't improve and stay flexed, then the joint can get very stiff and also stuck, causing functional problems later in life.

What is the treatment?

We always watch and wait for a few months to see if the triggering improves by itself. If after three months the thumb is still triggering or stuck down, then surgery is the next step. This is done as a day case under a general anaesthetic (your child will be asleep).

What is involved with the operation?

Through a small horizontal skin crease incision over the lump, the tight tunnel that the tendon glides in is released. Care is needed to avoid the tiny nerves that supply the sensation to the tip of the thumb. We use dissolvable stitches and a non-sticky dressing with a crepe bandage that stays on until your first follow up appointment. The nursing staff will give you instructions regarding looking after your dressing and your follow-up appointment.

Contact us

If you require any further advice please contact:

Nina Doherty, Clinical Nurse Specialist 0118 322 8746 or 0118 322 5111, bleep 232.

More information

Visit the Trust website at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Friends & Family Test: While you are in hospital please spare a few moments to answer one question 'Would you recommend our service to family and friends if they required similar care or treatment?' by filling in the card given.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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