

Trigger Thumb/Finger

Information for parents and carers

This leaflet provides information about your child's trigger thumb or finger. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your child's care.

What is a trigger thumb/finger?

Trigger thumb/finger (digit) is a condition which causes the affected digit to "lock" as it is bent towards the palm. It can be painful at the base of the digit when it is moved or has pressure applied to it. The digit can get stuck in the bent position and then suddenly "pop" straight.

What causes trigger thumb/finger?

Tendons connect bone to muscle and enable the joint to move as the muscle contracts. The tendon sits in a protective cover called the tendon sheath, which has a small amount of fluid within it to allow the tendon to move freely and smoothly. A trigger thumb/finger is caused when there is a problem with the tendon or sheath, for example swelling and inflammation, which causes roughness on the tendon meaning it can't slide easily. The exact reason for this occurring isn't fully known but it can occasionally start following an injury to the hand.

What are the symptoms of trigger thumb/finger?

A bent digit that appears to be 'stuck' in that position. There may also be a clicking of the digit on movement. Pain and tenderness may be experienced at the site of the triggering.

What are the treatment options?

Trigger thumb/finger is not harmful and often resolves itself without the need for any active treatment. It is advisable to try to avoid activities that cause pain during this time. Surgery involves releasing the tendon sheath which allows the tendon to run freely through it. This would be done by the Plastic Surgery team, and you will be referred to them for follow up.

We usually wait for the child to be between 3 and 4 years old before carrying out surgery. Your doctor will discuss the options with you and advise the best course of treatment for your child.

What will the follow up be?

As trigger thumb/finger is often self-resolving it may just be followed up in the Plastic Surgery Outpatients' Clinic. If surgery is considered the best option for your child, this would be carried out as a day case procedure under general anaesthetic (asleep) and will be discussed with you during your clinic appointment.

What should I do if I'm worried?

Ask us for help. We are here to provide more information and advice. You can either contact the Paediatric Emergency Department --0131 312 0017 / 0018 or the Plastic Surgery Secretaries whose number you will find on your clinic letter.

