

Trigger Finger / Thumb

Information Sheet



Trigger finger is thickening of a tendon and/or the tunnel that the tendon glides through. It can be uncomfortable and can cause clicking or catching while the finger is bending towards the palm and returning to moving away from the palm.

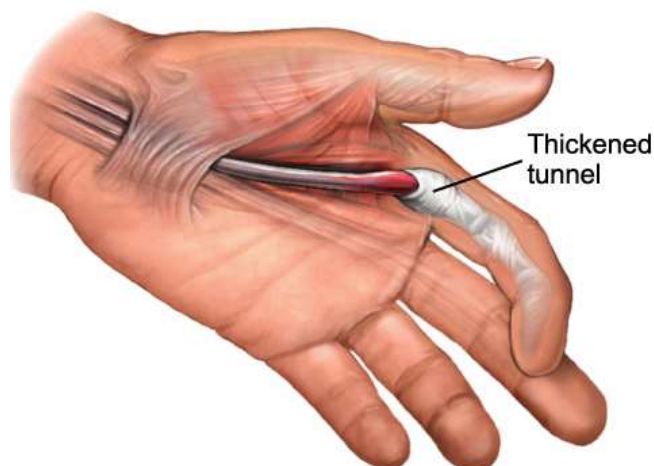
The direct cause is not known but this can be more common with metabolic conditions such as diabetes or with inflammatory conditions such as gout and rheumatoid arthritis.

There is also some evidence to suggest excessive and/or unaccustomed hand activity that loads the tendons can contribute to this condition.

What are the Signs & Symptoms

People can experience a range of different signs and symptoms when experiencing trigger finger / thumb. The common features include:

- Pain and/or discomfort base of finger or thumb.
- Worse in the morning.
- Worse after sustained grip tasks.
- Catching and/or clicking.
- A thickening, palpable below the finger involved.
- Manual release of the finger from flexion.



How Can I Treat Trigger Finger/Thumb?

There are several management options for trigger finger / thumb and they are as follows:

- **Do nothing.**

- **To undertake conservative management** over the next 8 to 12 weeks, this involves:
 - **Night splint.** The purpose is to stop the finger at the knuckle joint from bending as this would allow the tendon to move sufficiently to trigger. This is why it can be worse in the morning as we tend to make fists in our sleep.
 - **Self-myofascial release 3 repetitions little and often several times per day.** The purpose is to try and stimulate the body's own self-healing to try to reduce the thickening, while keeping the tendon mobile. You only do 3 repetitions to prevent it becoming irritable to repeated intervention, but enough to stimulate. It is uncomfortable to do topical gels may help reduce this afterwards.
 - **Behavioural changes,** such as ensuring you protect the palm of your hands (padded gloves) during activity such as gardening. Ensuring sharps are sharp enough and that you are using the suitable tool for the job e.g. secateurs when should use loppers. Using softer grips, pacing activity, and consider if there are any other ways to complete a task.
- **Under taking a cortisone injection.** The joint is usually injected with local anaesthetic and corticosteroid. The anaesthetic will reduce the initial pain and the corticosteroid will aim to reduce the inflammation. The aim of cortisone is to reduce the swelling if it does not settle with conservative management.
- **Surgical Release.** This involves cutting the strap over the top of the affected tendons. This is done to relieve the irritation of the finger/thumb.

Finger Splints

These are types of splints that you can buy online and are useful to wear at night. This prevents triggering at night time, and can help reduce stiffness and triggering in the morning.

