

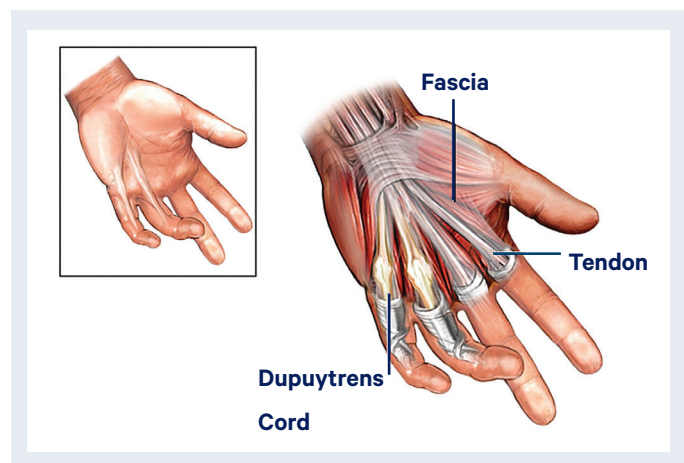
## Dupuytren's Contracture

### WHAT IS DUPUYTREN'S AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Dupuytren's is a condition which affects mainly the hands and sometimes the feet. Tissue thickens under the skin in the palm of the hand and nodules or small hard lumps can form. These are usually painless. These nodules can progress to become a cord, which over months or years can begin to tighten and pull your finger into a bent position. This is called a Dupuytren's contracture. It is often mild and painless but can be a nuisance. It can become more severe and the position of your finger may make some activities difficult.

Dupuytren's contracture can occur on both hands and more commonly affects the little or ring fingers. It affects both men and women and the most common age is in your 50's for men and 60's for women.

We do not know what causes Dupuytren's but it does generally run in families and is more common if you have Irish, Scottish or Scandinavian ancestry. People who have diabetes are also more likely to get it.



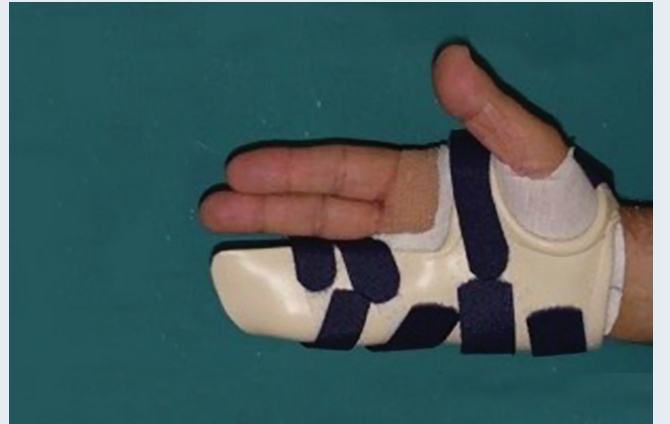
### HOW IS DUPUYTREN'S TREATED?

#### Hand Therapy

If the Dupuytren's contracture is not causing you any problems you may not need any treatment. Hand therapy rehabilitation, splints or a steroid injection does not appear to help or change your Dupuytren's contracture.

Hand therapy is important if you have surgery on your Dupuytren's contracture. Your hand therapist will help you recover from your surgery and your treatment may include

- A splint to help hold the finger/s straight overnight. This will encourage your scar tissue to grow longer and stop your finger curling down after the surgery.
- Wound and scar management.
- Exercises to regain finger/s movement and strength to your hand.



#### Surgery

If the Dupuytren's contracture is affecting what you do then your best option may be surgery. Your GP or hand therapist will need to refer you to a hand surgeon who does this surgery. The most common surgery is called a fasciectomy which involves the surgeon removing the thickened connective tissue causing the contracture. The hand surgeon will tell you about the right operation for you.

### WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY REHABILITATION?

If you have surgery for your Dupuytren's contracture your surgeon will give you a follow up appointment to see them. They will usually refer you to a hand therapist to have a splint made and for exercises to help give you the best outcome following your surgery.

The finger/ fingers may become stiff and you may not be able to keep the finger as straight as what the surgeon was able to get it after the operation. This can be because of thick scars that happen after the operation. This is where your hand therapist will be able to help you.

You will need to use your splint at night for 4 or 5 months after your operation. This helps to stop your finger returning to its bent position.

It can take time to recover fully after this operation and you may need to see your hand therapist for 2 or 3 months to get the best result.



## Dupuytren's Contracture

### Do

- Keep your wound clean and dry after surgery.
- Wear your splint overnight.
- Follow your hand therapists' instructions about exercises and using your hand.
- Avoid daily activity that involves any strong gripping or lifting while your hand is healing.

### Do Not

- Wet your wound until you are told you can by your hand surgeon or hand therapist.

### WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

- The most common problem from having surgery is that the Dupuytren's contracture may come back, or scar tissue makes your finger hard to straighten again. Hand therapy can help guide you with what to do if this happens.
- If your splint is uncomfortable or rubbing book an appointment to see your hand therapist.
- If things are getting worse book an appointment to see your hand therapist.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DO NOT HAVE TREATMENT?

The Dupuytren's contracture can get worse over time and if the finger / fingers become very bent they will get in the way of a lot of daily tasks. If your finger/ fingers are becoming more bent and you are unable to put your hand flat on the table then you should see your doctor to ask for a referral to a hand surgeon to see if an operation is needed.

### CONTACT DETAILS AND REFERENCES

Your hand therapist is

Merivale Hand Clinic (03) 3559775

<http://www.kleisertherapy.com/dupuytren-s-contracture/>

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