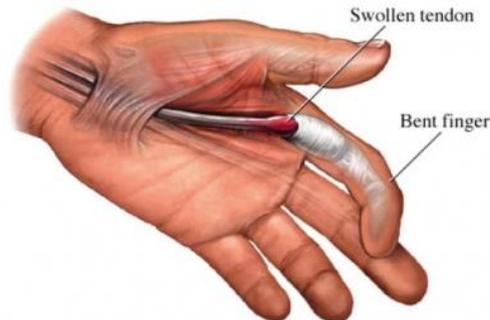


TRIGGER FINGER



Definition

The flexor tendons are the tendons in the hand which run over the palm and are responsible for bending the fingers into a fist. From the base of the fingers to the finger tips, the tendon is held in place to the bone by fibrous bands called pulleys. When bending the fingers, the flexor tendons glide underneath the pulleys to produce movement.

Trigger finger results from a thickening or nodule on the flexor tendon. This causes abnormal gliding of the tendon beneath the pulley. Specifically, when the finger is either bent or straightened, the thickening or nodule gets caught when passing underneath the pulley. This causes a “popping” or triggering of the affected finger, or in more severe cases, a locking of the finger in a certain position. Triggering almost always occurs at the base of the finger and is a relatively common condition.

Symptoms

Typically, the first symptom of a trigger finger is tenderness and possibly swelling or a nodule at the base of the finger. As the trigger worsens, the individual may find difficulty straightening up the finger, which eventually results in a painful snap into extension. Stiffness may be experienced in the fingers, which may worsen during sleep or after long periods of inactivity.

Hand Therapy

Conservative management may include splinting to partially immobilise the affected finger, as well as management of the swelling. Typically, a cortisone injection at the site will accompany conservative management. Therapy, together with the cortisone, may allow the trigger to settle, thus relieving symptoms in the future. Splinting may continue for about 4 weeks.

Surgical options

Should conservative treatment not work then surgery may be indicated to release (loosen) the A1 pulley at the base of the finger, so that the tendon no longer triggers by passing under it. Release of the A1 pulley is a minor operation and recovery is relatively rapid. Post operative hand therapy may include management of the scar and swelling as well as maintaining and improving range of movement in the affected fingers.