

PATIENT INFORMATION

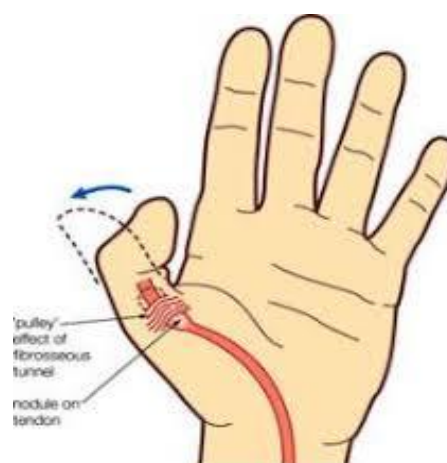
Trigger Thumb

Management and Advice

What is Trigger Thumb?

Trigger thumb occurs when thickening develops around the flexor tendon sheath preventing free flowing motion of the flexor tendon.

This can occur for many reasons: repetitive tasks; diabetes; arthritis; or for no reason at all. Triggering can occur in any finger or the thumb and can either be in your dominant or non-dominant hand.



How to manage a Trigger Thumb.

Trigger thumb can cause pain when you try to straighten your thumb so this needs to be done gently – often soaking your hand in warm water is a good way to help ease the finger straight again.

Ideally, we want to prevent the thumb from getting stuck in a bent position, as the more time this happens, the more thickened the tendon becomes.

Ice massage – put some baby oil on the base of your thumb. Hold an ice cube in some cling film or a cloth and firmly rub the ice cube over the base of your thumb until it is all melted. This will help to reduce the inflammation.

Anti-Inflammatory gel e.g. Ibuprofen gel – if this is not contra-indicated by any other medical conditions you have (check with your pharmacist) – put this on at night time over the base of your thumb.

Exercises for Trigger Thumb.

Gentle exercises can be effective in encouraging better movement and free gliding of the tendons within your thumb.

Hold the middle of the thumb and slowly bend and straighten the tip. Repeat holding onto the joint below



Touch the tip of each finger with your thumb and then try to slide down the length of each finger.

Try doing 5 – 10 of each of these exercises 4 times a day.



Activity Modification

Try to reduce doing repetitive gripping tasks which maybe aggravating the tendon (eg scissors, secateurs)

Splinting for trigger thumb?

Splinting is very effective if your thumb triggers overnight and as a treatment for mild triggering. There are splints available to buy on the internet. Search for: *trigger thumb splint*

The aim of splinting is to reduce the movement of the tendon to prevent the nodule from passing through the tight pulley and getting stuck. By using the splint at night, it will rest the tendon and pulley giving it chance to reduce the thickening.

Further treatment options?

If your thumb is constantly triggering or you are having to use your other hand to straighten the thumb you may benefit from a steroid injection. If this is not successful, then a small operation can be performed to release the pulley.

If you have any problems / concerns, please contact:

Crow Thorne Hand Therapy Centre

Torbay Hospital
Lawes Bridge
Torquay
TQ2 7AA

01803 654935
✉ tsdft.handtherapyreferrals@nhs.net
www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.