

ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL HEALTHSOURCE

Trigger Finger

Trigger finger is actually a common condition that results when one of your fingers or thumb catches in a bent position, as if to pull a trigger. The condition often affects people over 40, especially those with a history of diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis.

The cause of trigger finger is unknown. However, its progression is well understood. The condition involves the tendons and pulleys in the hand that bend the finger. The tendons connect the muscles of the forearm with the bones of the finger. A slick lining or sheath covers each tendon, and when the finger is bent, the tendons glide back and forth, guided by a restraining pulley or yoke.

Trigger finger develops when the tendon sheath becomes inflamed and swollen. A knot or thickening in the tendon arises. The knot passes through the pulley as the finger bends, but is stuck as the finger straightens. Further irritation results and a cycle of irritation, swelling, catching and more irritation continue until the finger locks in a bent position.

Generally, a doctor can diagnose trigger finger upon examination. The finger may be swollen and there may be a bump or nodule over the joint in the palm of the hand. Stiffness and pain may also be present.

Trigger finger can be treated. Initial treatment involves rest, splinting the extended finger, and taking aspirin or ibuprofen to reduce the swelling and ease the pain.

If the symptoms persist, a steroid injection in the tendon sheath may be prescribed. This will usually relieve the pain and locking for several months.

As a last resort, surgery may be necessary to release the tendon. If surgery is done, active motion can be restored immediately. However, hand therapy may be necessary to regain better use of the finger.



Jeffrey A. Herold, MD, FACS

Great Lakes Plastic Surgery
1526 North Taylor Drive
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920/803-1598



St. Nicholas Hospital

3100 Superior Avenue
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920/459-8300

www.stnicholashospital.org

An Affiliate of Hospital Sisters Health System

In Partnership With

PHYSICIANS'
HEALTH NETWORK