

Information for Patients

Most cases of trigger finger will not require surgery and this should only be considered if specific criteria are met. This is because medical evidence tells us that in most cases, alternative treatments should be tried first and can be just as effective.

About the condition

Trigger finger occurs when the tendons which bend the thumb or finger into the palm intermittently jam in a tight tunnel known as the flexor sheath. This causes either clicking or catching of the finger during movement, stiffness of the finger or locking of the finger in the palm of the hand.

It is important that you and your doctor make a shared decision about what is best for you if your trigger finger becomes a problem. When deciding what is best, you should consider the benefits, the risks, the alternatives and what will happen if you do nothing.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the intervention?

Although surgery is usually very effective, it should only be considered after other treatments have been tried first and haven't resolved the problem or when your finger is locked in the palm of your hand or if you are diabetic.

What are the **RISKS** of the intervention?

The risks of surgery are small, but include infection, numbness, stiffness and a tender scar in the palm of the hand. These usually cause temporary problems, but very occasionally can be permanent.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

Cortisone injections are the recommended first line of treatment for most trigger fingers. However, cortisone injections are less likely to be effective if you are diabetic.

If your trigger finger is causing no problems then no treatment is required and the problem may go away on its own. Avoiding activities which seem to cause the problem may help if that's possible. You might also try wearing a splint on the affected finger, but these can be cumbersome. The recommended treatment is one or two steroid injections which usually resolve the issue. A steroid injection carries a very small risk of an infection which could in rare cases be serious.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

Trigger finger is often no more than a nuisance and doing nothing will not be harmful to your health.

You can find out more about the [NHS Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online.