



Digital mucoid cyst

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Version 5

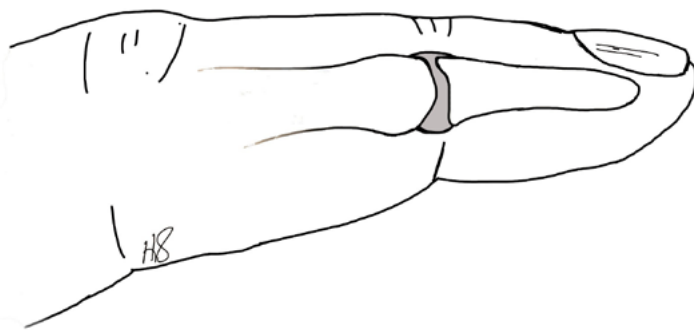
> About this leaflet

The purpose of this leaflet is to tell you about the symptoms and treatment of digital mucoid cysts.

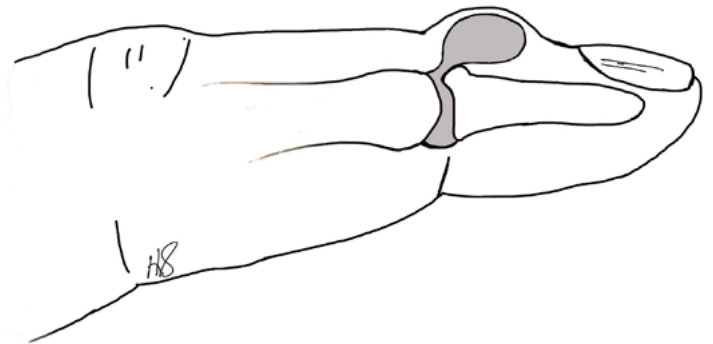
> What is a mucoid cyst?

A mucoid cyst is a swelling that occurs over the last joint in the finger or thumb.

All the joints in your hand are lubricated by fluid which helps them to move freely. This fluid is usually contained within the joint capsule. Underlying arthritis can lead to small “bone spurs” which can cause thinning in part of the joint capsule. A mucoid cyst occurs when some of the fluid bulges out this thinner area and becomes trapped. This causes a swelling under the skin.



Normal finger



Finger with cyst

> What are the symptoms?

Some people will feel a tightness or discomfort in the area. It is very common for the cyst to catch on things during daily tasks, which can be painful. There is often some degree of arthritis in the finger which can cause pain and stiffness but it is safe to continue to use your hand.

The cyst can put pressure on the area where your fingernail grows from and cause a ridge or dent in the nail.

They can also sometimes burst and leak clear jelly like fluid. Occasionally, after the cyst bursts, the area can become infected.

Do I need treatment?

Mucoid cysts are generally harmless and it is safe to leave them. If they are interfering with your daily activities or bursting frequently, you may wish to consider treatment.

It is possible to aspirate the fluid from the cyst, however, most cysts will come back after this treatment. You should not repeatedly burst it yourself with a pin as this could lead to an infection which could spread into the joint and be hard to treat.

A small operation can be carried out to remove the cyst. This is usually carried out under local anaesthetic in the operating theatre. If the skin over the cyst is very thin or broken, then the surgeon might need to move the skin up your finger to cover the defect. If you have a “bone spur” this is smoothed down.

You will normally have stitches in your finger for 2 weeks after surgery and you need to keep the wound clean and dry during this time.

There is a small chance that the cyst could come back after surgery, but most people do not experience significant problems.

What are the risks of surgery?

All surgery carries a risk. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Most people will have a degree of tenderness or sensitivity in the scar after surgery. It will look a bit red and shiny for several weeks. You will notice that your finger feels swollen and a bit stiff. This usually improves with time and by massaging the scar after it heals.
- If you have underlying arthritis in the joint, then the pain from this will not improve after surgery.
- There is a small risk of having an infection after the surgery. Most infections can be treated with tablet antibiotics. It would be rare to need admission for hospital treatment.
- There is a low risk that the mucoid cyst could come back again.
- There is a very low risk that the tendon that straightens the last joint in your finger could get damaged. If this happens, then it can be repaired but it would slow down your recovery.

The risk of a significant problem after surgery is very low. There is a condition called complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS) which can happen after any hand surgery. We do not fully understand what causes CRPS. Patients who develop CRPS have severe pain, stiffness and swelling. Treatment is with painkillers and physiotherapy. The majority of patients who have CRPS will improve, however, a very small number will experience life changing symptoms.

Contact

If you have any questions or concerns, please email gjnh.handsurgery@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk or contact the orthopaedic clinic during office hours on 0141 951 5553. For out of hours, you should contact NHS 24.

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