

Trigger Finger Release

What is Trigger Finger?

Trigger finger is a condition where a finger becomes stiff, locks in a bent position, or straightens with a sudden, painful snap. It can also affect the thumb.

Your surgeon has recommended a **trigger finger release**, a procedure to relieve the condition. However, the decision to proceed with the surgery is entirely yours.

This document provides important information about the potential benefits and risks of the procedure to help you make an informed decision. If you have any unanswered questions, it is important to consult your surgeon or healthcare team.

Once all your concerns have been addressed and you feel ready to proceed, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form, which is the final step in the decision-making process. However, you may change your mind at any time before the surgery.

How Does Trigger Finger Occur?

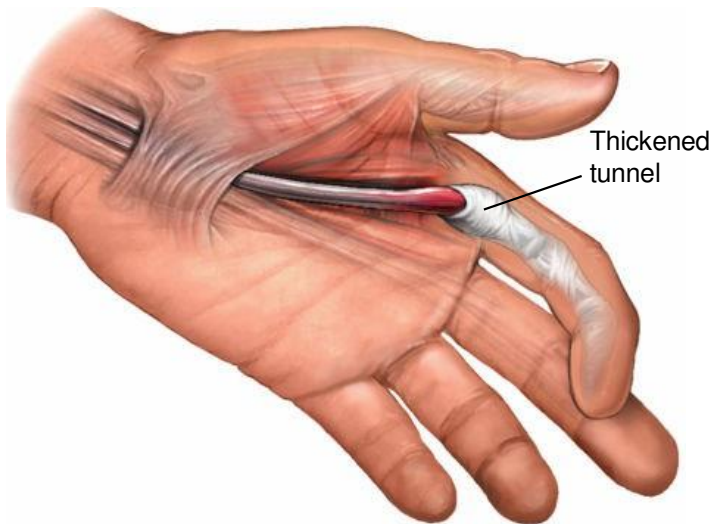
The tendons responsible for bending the fingers normally glide smoothly through tight tunnels formed by **flexor tendon pulleys**, which are attached to the bones in the hand. If the **fibrous sheath thickens**, it can cause the tunnel to become too tight, leading to the finger getting stuck in a bent position.

Over time, inflammation in the tendon may develop, resulting in the formation of a **nodule (lump)** that further restricts movement.

Trigger finger is more commonly seen in:

- **Women**
- Individuals with medical conditions such as **rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, or thyroid disorders**

However, in most cases, no specific cause can be identified.



Trigger finger

What Are the Benefits of Surgery?

The primary goal of surgery is to allow your finger to move freely without jamming or stiffness.

Are There Alternatives to Surgery?

- **Stretching Exercises** – In the early stages, simple stretching can help ease symptoms.
- **Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)** – Medications such as ibuprofen may help reduce inflammation and discomfort.
- **Splinting** – Wearing a splint at night can help prevent the affected finger from bending.
- **Steroid Injections** – An injection at the base of the affected finger can relieve symptoms in **6 out of 10 cases**, though multiple injections may be required.
- **When to Consider Surgery** – If one or two injections fail to resolve symptoms, surgery may be necessary.

What Happens If I Choose Not to Have Surgery?

If an **underlying cause** is identified and treated, symptoms may improve.

However, if steroid injections have not been effective, you may continue to experience difficulty moving your finger, and it may frequently **jam or remain stiff**. In some cases, the finger may become permanently stuck in a bent position and may not release, even when pulled.

If the condition remains untreated for an extended period, the **damage may become irreversible**, and a **trigger finger release** may not fully restore function.

What Does the Surgery Involve?

Before coming to the hospital, **remove any rings from your affected hand**.

The healthcare team will perform several checks to ensure the correct procedure is performed on the correct finger. You can assist by confirming your **name and procedure details** with your surgeon and the team.

The procedure is typically performed **under local anaesthetic** and takes approximately **20 minutes**.

During the Surgery:

- A **tourniquet** (tight strap) may be applied to **minimize bleeding**, allowing the surgeon to clearly see key structures such as nerves.
- A **small incision** is made at the base of the affected finger on the palm.
- The **fibrous sheath restricting the tendon** is carefully released, allowing the tendon to glide freely.
- The incision is then **closed with stitches**.



A trigger finger release

Medication Considerations

Inform your healthcare team about all medications you take, including **blood thinners, herbal remedies, dietary supplements, and over-the-counter medications**. Follow their recommendations regarding any necessary adjustments before surgery.

How Can I Prepare for Surgery?

- **Quit Smoking** – Stopping smoking before surgery reduces the risk of complications and improves overall health.
- **Maintain a Healthy Weight** – Excess weight increases the risk of surgical complications.
- **Exercise Regularly** – Staying active before surgery can aid recovery, but consult your healthcare provider before starting any new exercise routine.
- **Reduce Infection Risk** – Taking a bath or shower the day before or on the day of surgery can help minimize infection risks.

Possible Complications

The healthcare team will take steps to minimize complications, but risks vary based on factors such as **age, smoking, obesity, and pre-existing health conditions** like diabetes or heart disease.

Your **anaesthetist** will discuss potential risks associated with anaesthesia.

General Surgical Risks:

- **Bleeding** – While a **tourniquet** is used to reduce bleeding, excessive bleeding may require further treatment. Keeping your hand **elevated** can help reduce swelling.
- **Wound Infection** – Keep your wound clean and dry. Contact your healthcare team if you experience a **fever, pus, redness, or pain** at the incision site. Most infections respond to **antibiotics**, but further treatment may be necessary.
- **Allergic Reactions** – If you have known allergies, inform your doctor in advance. The healthcare team is trained to handle allergic reactions.

Specific Complications of Trigger Finger Release Surgery:

- **Nerve Damage** – In rare cases (**less than 1 in 100**), nerve injury may lead to **numbness** in the affected finger, which can be permanent.
- **Scar Sensitivity** – Some individuals experience **tenderness** at the scar site (**5 in 100 people**). This usually improves but may persist.
- **Bowstringing** – If important pulleys are accidentally released, the **tendon may shift away from the bone**, making it difficult to fully straighten the finger. This may require additional surgery.
- **Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)** – A rare condition that may cause **severe pain, stiffness, and reduced hand function**. Recovery can take months or years, and in some cases, stiffness may be permanent. Taking a **vitamin C supplement for six weeks post-surgery** may help reduce this risk—consult your doctor for guidance.
- **Persistent Symptoms (Risk: 1 in 10)** – Some individuals may **continue to experience stiffness or pain** despite surgery.

Post-Surgical Considerations

- **Pain Management** – Medication will be provided to manage discomfort. Take it as prescribed to facilitate recovery.
- **Scarring** – The surgical incision generally heals well, with the scar becoming **less noticeable over time**.

Recovery Timeline

In Hospital:

After surgery, you will be monitored in the recovery area before being discharged.

- You will have a **bandage on your hand** and may need to wear a sling.
- Most patients **go home the same day**, but in some cases, a longer stay may be recommended.
- If you have any concerns, contact your healthcare team for guidance.

Returning to Normal Activities:

If you had **sedation or general anaesthesia** and are discharged on the same day:

- A **responsible adult** should drive you home and stay with you for **at least 24 hours**.
- Avoid driving, operating machinery, signing legal documents, or drinking alcohol for at least **24 hours**.

Post-Surgical Care:

- **Do not wear rings for the first two days** or until swelling subsides.
- **Keep your hand elevated and bandaged for two days** to reduce swelling.
- **Exercise your fingers, elbow, and shoulder** to prevent stiffness.
- **After two days, reduce the dressing size**, but keep the wound clean and dry until the stitches are removed (usually after **two weeks**).

- **Gradual Activity Resumption:** Engage in light activities but avoid **heavy lifting** until cleared by your surgeon.
- **Driving & Cycling:** Avoid driving or riding a bike until you **can fully control your vehicle**, including in emergencies. Always check with your surgeon and insurance provider before resuming driving.

Long-Term Outlook

For **8 in 10 individuals**, symptoms **resolve quickly**, but if the finger was stiff before surgery, it may take **several months** to regain normal movement.

Surgical Success Rate

- The procedure successfully relieves symptoms in **9 out of 10 people**.

Summary

Trigger finger causes **stiffness, locking, or jamming** of the affected finger. If **steroid injections** fail, surgery can help restore free movement.

While surgery is generally **safe and effective**, complications may occur. Understanding these risks will help you make an informed decision and identify potential issues early.

Keep this document for reference and discuss any concerns with your healthcare team. Some risk statistics are based on global studies and databases. Consult your surgeon for **personalized advice** and possible alternative treatments.

Note: This document is for informational purposes only and does not replace professional medical advice.

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