



Orthopaedic Department

Ganglion Cysts

What are ganglion cysts?

Ganglion cysts are smooth lumps commonly found around the wrist and the hand. The most usual locations are on the back of the wrist joint, the palm side of the wrist and the base of the finger within the palm. It is also possible to find them on the end joints of the fingers; these are known as mucous cysts.

The swelling is caused by a leakage of synovial fluid from the joint or tendon lining. Ganglions are filled with this clear fluid or gel; they may change in size or even disappear completely. They are benign and do not spread. Sometimes they are mildly painful if they are close to a nerve.

Treatment

Ganglions can be safely left untreated, especially if they are painless. If they are painful or limit movement it is possible to remove the ganglion surgically.

Before you come into the hospital for your surgery please make sure that you have removed all jewellery, especially rings on the hand that is to be operated on. Also please remove any nail varnish, gel or false nails.

What happens at surgery?

Surgery to remove the cyst is usually done as a day case under a general anaesthetic (being put to sleep) or a regional anaesthetic (having the whole arm numbed with anaesthetic injections but you remain awake). This is because the ganglion has a stalk (or root) into the joint which may be painful to remove under a local anaesthetic alone. A local anaesthesia may be used during surgery to remove a ganglion cyst around the finger.

After surgery your hand will be heavily bandaged for two to three days, the dressings should then be reduced but the wound should remain covered and dry until removal of your stitches. Occasionally, a temporary half-plaster cast is used (backslab) to limit movement at the wrist for a week or two. You may need painkillers during this time.



Patient Information

You will be advised by the staff about pain relief. Approximately 10-14 days following surgery, the dressings will be taken off and the stitches removed. This is usually done at your GP practice.

What are the possible complications?

- It is possible to have further leakage of fluid causing a reoccurrence of the ganglion in 10-30% of cases; it is also possible to have a similar problem in a different area within the hand.
- Any ongoing pain usually indicates that the ganglion was not the source of the pain
- As with any surgical procedure there is a small risk of infection.
- Occasionally persistent swelling, joint stiffness and pain may occur.
- Scar tenderness is common, although this normally subsides by six weeks. Massage to the scar can be helpful to relieve these symptoms.

How long will I be off work and when can I drive?

- Depending on the site of surgery you may find driving difficult during the first 2 weeks. You can drive after your stitches are removed and when you can make a full pain free fist.
- You should be able to return to work within a few weeks depending on the nature of your job.

Further information sheets will be available to you when you leave the hospital:

- Post Operative Hand and Arm instructions
- Care following a general anaesthetic

In the event of you experiencing any problems please do not hesitate to contact your GP or the Day Surgery Unit.

Further Information

For further information on your procedure please contact:

- The Day Surgery Unit on 024 7696 6861 or 024 7696 6868
- The Day Surgery Unit St Cross Hospital Rugby on 01788 663264

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6861 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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