

Dupuytren's Contracture

The aim of this information sheet is to give you some understanding of the problems you may have with your hand. It has been divided into sections, describing your wrist, what we know about Dupuytren's Contracture and your treatment options. It is not a substitute for professional healthcare advice and should be used in conjunction with verbal information given by your GP or Physiotherapist.

What is Dupuytren's Contracture (disease)?

Dupuytren's contracture is a common condition. It usually occurs in middle age or later and is more common in men than women. In your hand there are fibrous bands of tissue running along the fingers and the palm. This is called the fascia. Dupuytren's Disease (or Dupuytren's Contracture) is the thickening and tightening of the fascia. Firm lumps appear just beneath the skin of the palm of the hand. In some cases they form cords or bands that can stop the finger fully straightening. Lumps over the back of the finger knuckles (Garrod's knuckle pads) and lumps on the soles of the feet are sometimes seen in some people with Dupuytren's. It is usually a painless condition.

Why does it occur?

The cause is unknown, but it is more common in Northern Europe than elsewhere. It often runs in families. Dupuytren's disease may be associated with diabetes, smoking and high alcohol consumption, but many affected people have none of these. It does not appear to be associated with manual work. It occasionally appears after injury to the hand or wrist or after surgery to these areas.

What are the symptoms?

Dupuytren's disease begins with nodules in the palm, often in line with the ring finger. The nodules are sometimes uncomfortable on pressure in the early stages, but the discomfort almost always improves over time. In about one affected person out of every three, the nodules extend to form cords that pull the finger towards the palm. This prevents the finger straightening fully. Sometimes, one or more fingers may become fixed in a bent position. This happens slowly over months and years rather than weeks

Cord prevents straightening of the fingers

CC: NHS choices



What is the treatment?

There is no cure. Surgery can usually make the bent fingers straighter, though not always fully straight; it cannot make the disease go away. Over the longer term, Dupuytren's disease may come back in operated digits or in other areas of the hand.

Surgery is not needed if fingers can be straightened fully. It is likely to be helpful when it has become impossible to put the hand flat on a table. Usually surgery is not done unless you have at least a 30 degree bend in your finger. The surgeon can advise on the type of operation best suited to you, and on its timing. The procedure maybe carried out under local, regional (injection of local anaesthetic at the shoulder) or general anaesthetic.

Medication

Many people use medication to help them remain active and to cope with their pain and symptoms. It is recommended you take any medication as prescribed.

Work

It is usually recommended that you try to stay at work, or get back to work as soon as possible. You do not need to be pain or symptom free to return to work. Research has shown the longer you are off work the less likely it is that you return.

Useful website: www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk/