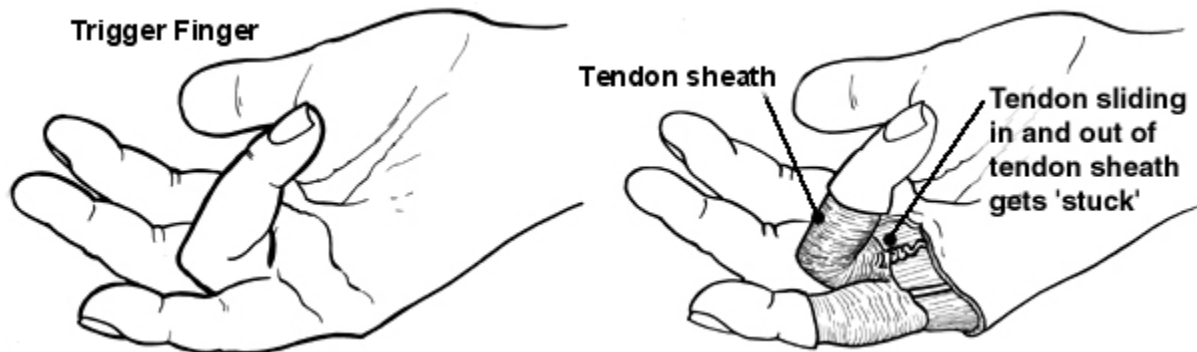


Trigger Finger

A trigger finger is one that becomes 'locked' after it has been bent (flexed). It is difficult to straighten out without pulling on it by the other hand. A 'click' may be heard when it is pulled straight. One or more fingers may be affected. Sometimes there is mild pain and/or a small swelling at the base of the affected finger.

What causes trigger finger?

Inflammation and/or swelling of the finger tendon or tendon sheath are the likely cause.



A tendon is a strong tissue that attaches a muscle to a bone. In this case the tendon comes from a muscle in the forearm. It passes through the palm and attaches to the finger bone. The muscle pulling on this tendon bends (flexes) the finger towards the palm. The tendon sheath is like a tunnel that covers the finger part of the tendon. Normally, the tendon slides easily in and out of the sheath as the finger is flexed and straightened. In trigger finger the tendon can slide out of the sheath when the finger is flexed. However, it cannot easily slide back in due to the swelling. The finger then remains flexed unless some force is used to pull it straight.

Most cases of trigger finger occur for no apparent reason in well people. Sometimes it occurs as part of an illness such as rheumatoid arthritis, amyloidosis or diabetes. It is also more common in women past the menopause, in people on dialysis and in people with carpal tunnel syndrome.

What is the treatment for trigger finger?

- Steroid injection - into the tendon sheath is the usual treatment. It is combined with a local

anesthetic to make the injection painless. Steroids work by reducing inflammation. A finger splint worn for a while to rest the finger is usual after the injection. This treatment works in about 9 in 10 cases. A second injection may be needed if the first is not effective.

- *An operation* - under local anesthetic is an alternative. A small cut is made at the base of the finger and the tendon sheath is widened. With this operation there is a small chance of damaging the tiny finger nerve and causing some numbness to the finger.
- *No treatment* - is an option at first, as some get better without any treatment.