

Patient Education Dupuytren's Disease

What is it? Dupuytren's disease is an abnormal thickening of one layer of the palmar tissue. The affected tissue lies between the skin and the tendons. The tendons are not affected.

Some people develop lumps in the palm and/or tight cords, which pull the fingers in towards the palm. These cords prevent the finger from being straightened.

The disease commonly affects the ring and little fingers but in can be seen in other parts of the hand.

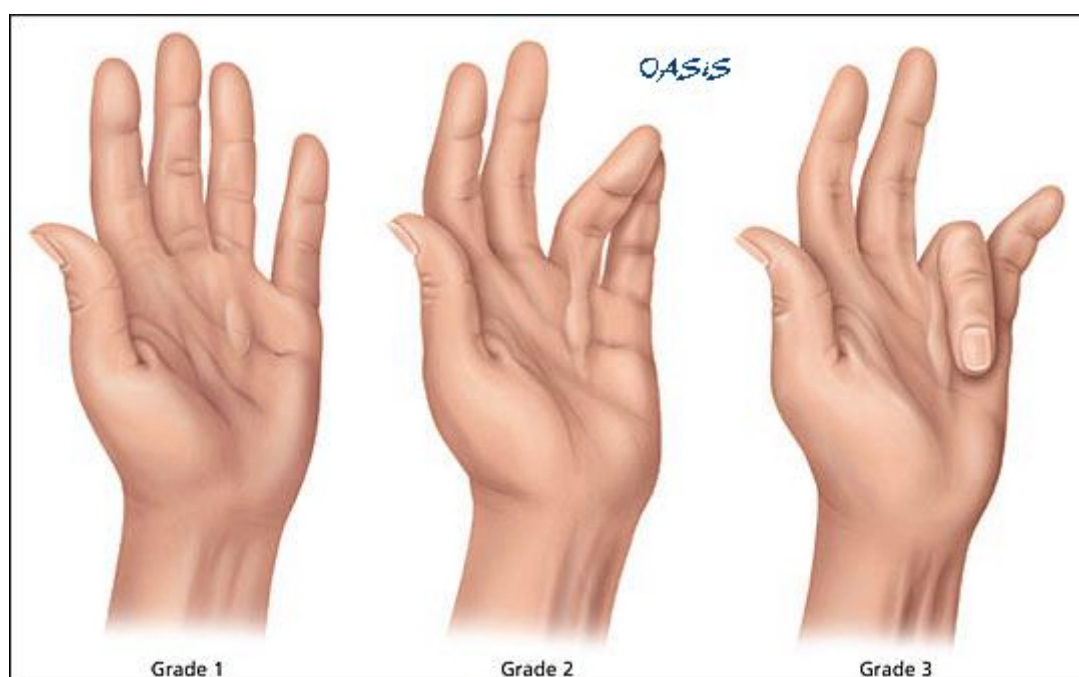
Occasionally the disease will cause some thickening over the back of the knuckles of the finger.

Some people develop similar problems in the soles of the feet.



What causes it? Unfortunately the exact cause of Dupuytren's disease is still unknown. It tends to be associated with white people of north Men are more commonly affected than women. The disease is usually seen in people over the age of 40. It is unlikely that a previous injury or repetitive working practices are factors contributing to the development of Dupuytren's disease.

Progression of Dupuytren's disease. You may have noticed the first signs of the disease some time ago. In the early stages there may be a small lump, which appears in the palm of your hand or finger. This can often be mistaken for hard skin. Sometimes there is a small hole or pit, which appears in the palm. It may take many months or even years for the disease to progress to the stage where there is a cord or contracture.



The rate of progression will vary from person to person. Some people may develop a more severe form of the disease. They tend to be people who develop the disease at a young age, and those people who have the disease in other areas of the hand.

What treatment can I have? Unfortunately there is no cure for the disease. The only way in which the condition can be managed is through surgery.

The aim of surgery is to enable the fingers to straighten. Therefore, if you do not have a contracture surgery is not necessary. Having a lump in the palm does not mean that surgery is required.

Surgery may be considered if you have a contracture greater than 40° at the knuckle joint or 20° at the middle joint and the contracture has progressed over the past 6 months.

Surgery will not cure the disease. But it will manage the effects of it.

Even after surgery the Dupuytren's disease may return either in the same place or elsewhere in the hand.

What does the surgery involve? If you are fit and well, with no other medical problems, your surgery can be done as a day case procedure. That means you come into the hospital in the morning and go home later that day. Other people will have their surgery as in-patients.

The surgery is usually done under general anaesthetic.

The surgeon will remove the tight cords that are pulling the finger down. Sometimes it is necessary to take a skin graft from the wrist to cover the open areas on the finger.

When you leave hospital you will have stitches in your hand and if a skin graft is necessary, in your wrist.

It may not be possible to get the fingers completely straight immediately after surgery.

What are the likely complications? There are possible complications with any surgery. These include infection and a condition known as complex regional pain syndrome.

Complications following surgery for Dupuytren's contracture include recurrence and extension of the disease.

What happens after surgery? After 2 days the specialist nurse will see you in the clinic. She will check your stitches and wound for any signs of infection. Your dressings will be reduced so that you can begin to move your hands. At the same time you will be seen by the occupational therapist, who will provide you with a splint to wear at night, and help you regain the movement in your hand. You are advised to continue with

your splint for at least 6 months after surgery. Both the nurse specialist and the occupational therapist will see you regularly. Your progress will be formally reviewed after 3 months, 6 months and 12 months.

What do I need to do now? If you have been listed for surgery you will receive a letter asking you to come in for your operation.

The letter will explain when and where to go.

If your condition does not require surgery now it may be necessary to review your movement in a few months time.

Further information

If you are interested in making an appointment to discuss a treatment, Please call us on telephone 01215807406

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