

What is trigger finger?

Trigger finger is a condition that develops when the covering of your finger tendon becomes inflamed. This inflammation causes your finger to “snap” or “click.” If more severe, the finger can become stuck in a bent position. If the condition affects the thumb, it can get stuck in an extended position. You can develop trigger finger in any of your fingers, including your thumb. It’s also possible for more than one finger to become symptomatic at the same time. As a result of the bent finger, you may find it difficult to grip objects or engage in your usual activities.

What are the symptoms of trigger finger?

In addition to a noticeably bent finger you can’t straighten, you may also develop symptoms like:

- Finger stiffness
- Bumps on the base of the affected finger
- Popping sensations during movement

In early trigger finger, you may notice that your finger joint catches during movements until it gradually becomes locked in a bent position.

What causes trigger finger?

The tendons in your finger keep your muscles attached to your bones. A protective covering surrounds your tendons, but overuse can cause this covering to become irritated and eventually inflamed. Chronic inflammation of the tendon covering can make it difficult for your tendon to move normally, eventually limiting your movements and causing your finger to become locked in a bent position. Ongoing irritation may also cause scar tissue to develop that forms a lump on the tendon and sometimes a ganglion cyst can also emerge. Sometimes the finger can become permanently contracted. Sometimes nonsurgical treatment options, such as night splints, changes in activity, anti-inflammatory medications, and steroid injections, can alleviate your pain. If not, you may need surgery to effectively address the affected tendon, releasing it can allow your finger to return to a normal position and range of motion.

What is involved in trigger finger surgery?

Dr. Hung performs surgery using a small incision to cut the affected area of the tendon covering, effectively releasing the tendon of the finger and restoring full range of motion. You can undergo the procedure on an outpatient basis under IV sedation, or Dr. Hung can use local anesthesia to numb the area and keep you comfortable while awake.

How long does it take to heal from trigger finger surgery?

After the surgery is complete, you can expect to return home to rest for the day. Dr. Hung may advise you to start moving your finger soon after surgery to restore your functionality and minimize stiffness.

Most people enjoy an immediate improvement in mobility and routine healing by four weeks post-op. You may experience some swelling and stiffness in your hand or fingers, but it should usually resolve on its own. In certain cases, especially with co-existing arthritis, hand therapy can be helpful to maximize recovery.