

# Hand Therapy

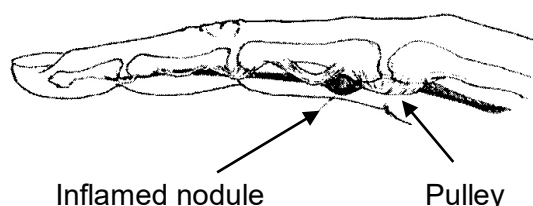
## Trigger finger/thumb

### What is trigger finger?

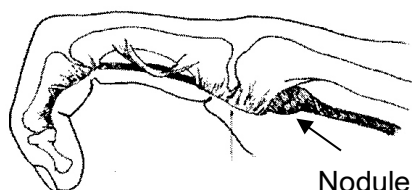
Trigger finger is when it is hard to straighten a finger or thumb after it is bent. Sometimes the finger or thumb will catch or lock as you try to move it. This is the triggering.

### How does it happen?

A tendon is a band of strong tissue (like a rope) that joins a muscle to a bone. In the fingers and thumb, the layer around the tendon contains several pulleys that stop the tendon from moving away from the bone.



In trigger finger the tendon or layer that covers the tendon gets thicker. If a lump (nodule) forms on a tendon, it becomes difficult for the tendon to pass through the pulleys. Many people can picture this best when they think of threading cotton through the eye of a needle, and seeing some of the fibres from the cotton bunch back to make a lump. The sudden jerk of the finger as it straightens occurs as the nodule finally passes through the pulley. If it happens often, the condition may worsen.



## What are the symptoms of trigger finger?

- A snapping sensation (triggering) in the finger or thumb
- Difficulty straightening the finger smoothly or at all (it may lock while bent)
- Sore to touch, often at the base of the finger or thumb, on the palm
- Lump able to be felt on the tendon
- Soreness in the finger or thumb
- Loss of strength in the hand

## How is trigger finger treated?

- Your therapist will assess and advise on treatment. They may make a splint to limit finger or thumb movement. This stops the lump from passing through the pulley.
- Resting the tendon will allow swelling to settle.
- To work, the splint needs to be worn at all times, even when using your hands.
- Your doctor may suggest an injection into the affected area.
- If you do not get better, surgery to release the pulley may be recommended.

## Do I need to change my daily activities?

- Sometimes trigger finger is caused or made worse by something that you do. Try to think of things that may be making the symptoms with your finger or thumb worse.
- Changing the way you do these things can often help with your symptoms. You can do most things wearing a splint or shortly after having an injection.
- It is important to avoid tight gripping or pinching, using your hand for long periods and direct pressure over the pulley area.

**Please contact your therapist if you have any questions.**

**Therapist \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_**

Acknowledgements: Townsville Hospital. Images: *Trigger finger*. (2017), retrieved from <https://upload.orthobullets.com/question/1050/images/triggerfinger300.jpg>

Published: 2012 Reviewed: Mar 2019 Next Review due: Mar 2022 Handout Number: 45.0

An initiative of the Queensland Hand Therapy Network (QHTN)