

Sorting out *Hand Disorders*

Trigger finger—catching of the tendon

The hand is made up of a system of pulleys through which the tendons slide freely to allow movement in the fingers and wrist. Trigger finger, characterized by a distinct, painful popping or clicking of the finger, most often develops due to a thickening of the outer layer of the tendon, which can cause it to catch as the finger is straightened.

Treatments for trigger finger include oral anti-inflammatory medication, cortisone injections, splinting and physical therapy. Surgery, to cut the affected pulley, is required only when symptoms are unrelenting or if the trigger finger progresses to a condition called “locking,” when the finger remains stuck in either a straight or a bent position, according to S. Steven Yang, M.D., M.P.H., Department of Orthopedic Surgery.

Surgery can be performed either in an operating room, via incision, or in an office procedure, in which a needle with a cutting tip is inserted through the skin. Open surgery is always used when the thumb is affected, when multiple digits are involved or when the patient has concurrent carpal tunnel and trigger finger. “With both procedures, most patients experience complete recovery within four to six weeks,” says Dr. Yang.

