



When Fingers Lock; Diagnosing & Treating Trigger Finger

Is the base of your finger or thumb tender? Is your finger or thumb joint stiff? Does your finger or your thumb sometimes snap, click or lock in a bent position?

If so, you may have trigger finger or trigger thumb, a painful condition that causes fingers or thumbs to catch or lock in a bent position. It can be caused by repetitive movements or vigorous use of fingers or thumbs. Using a forceful grip on a tool, tennis racquet, or even a rake or shovel, for a long period of time, can also cause trigger finger or trigger thumb. However, triggering often occurs without a clear reason.



“The condition often first appears as pain along the finger, or tenderness at the base of the finger.” says Jason Fanuele, MD, (pictured left) a board certified orthopedic surgeon at Good Samaritan Medical Center who subspecializes in hand surgery. “As the condition worsens, your finger may become stuck in a bent position and you will experience a painful snapping when you attempt to straighten it. In severe cases the finger may not fully straighten at all.”

Trigger finger or thumb happens when tendons in the finger or thumb become inflamed or irritated. Tendons are strong bands of tissue at the end of muscles where they attach to bones.

“Healthy tendons glide through the sheaths that cover them, but when a tendon becomes inflamed and swollen, the tendon doesn’t glide as smoothly through the narrowed sheath, making the finger or thumb stuck in a bent position. It catches like a knot in your shoelace.” says Dr. Fanuele. Trigger finger and thumb are more common in women, and more commonly found in those 40 to 60 years of age. “Medical conditions that cause changes in tissues can also be a factor,” explains Dr. Fanuele. “Individuals with diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis can be at higher risk to develop trigger fingers.”

Physicians diagnose trigger finger and trigger thumb with a physical exam, and discussion of work-related and medical risk factors. Physicians look for a finger that may be swollen, stiff, painful, or locked in a bent position. Often, patients have a bump in the palm of the hand, over the joint at the base of the finger on the palm aspect of their hand.

To treat trigger finger, sometimes simply rest or modifying activity can be effective. “If symptoms continue, injection of a steroid such as cortisone into the tendon sheath can be beneficial and can actually cure the

problem,” says Dr. Fanuele. “If the trigger finger or thumb does not get better, surgery to release the tendon sheath may be recommended.”

To determine whether you may have the beginnings of trigger finger or thumb, be sure to report any stiffness or catching of your finger joint to your doctor, so he or she may review your symptoms and decide if treatment is necessary.

At Good Samaritan Medical Center, we have a care team in place to help you find the treatment options that fit your needs and schedule. With surgery centers located at the main hospital campus at 235 North Pearl Street, Brockton and at Roche Brother’s Place in North Easton, you are sure to find outpatient surgical services that are convenient without sacrificing the standard of care you require.

CONTACT US

For more information about our Orthopedic services visit us at **GoodSamaritanMedical.org/Orthopedics**

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