



Dupuytren's Disease

What you need to know about your condition

This handout describes the cause, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of Dupuytren's disease.

Dupuytren's (*Doo-pah-trens*) disease is an abnormal thickening of the fascia (the tissue just beneath the skin) of the palm. It often starts with firm lumps in the palm. In some patients, firm cords will develop beneath the skin, stretching from the palm into the fingers. Over time, these cords may cause the fingers to bend into the palm. When the fingers bend into the palm, it is called a contracture. Sometimes, the disease will cause thickening on top of the finger knuckles (knuckle pads) or nodules.

Cause of Dupuytren's Disease

The cause of Dupuytren's disease is unknown, but may be associated with biochemical factors within the fascia. The problem is more common in men over 40 and in people of European descent. It also has a genetic component and appears to run in families. There is no evidence that hand injuries or specific occupational exposures lead to a higher risk of developing Dupuytren's disease.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of Dupuytren's disease usually include a small lump or series of lumps and pits within the palm. Most times, the lumps are firm and stuck to the skin. Over time, a cord may develop, extending from the palm into one or more fingers, with the ring finger and little finger most commonly affected. These cords may be mistaken for tendons, but they actually lie between the skin and the tendons.

The first nodules may produce discomfort. In most cases, this discomfort goes away. Dupuytren's disease is not typically painful.

This disease may first be noticed because of difficulty placing the hand flat on an even surface. As the fingers are drawn into the palm, you may notice increasing difficulty with activities such as washing your hands or putting on gloves. Some people may only have small lumps or cords while others will develop severely bent fingers. More severe disease often occurs with an earlier age of onset.

Questions?

Call 206-598-4263

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help at any time during clinic hours.

UWMC Hand Center:
206-598-HAND

Diagnosing Dupuytren's Disease

An exam will be done by your hand surgeon to determine the severity of your disease.

Treatment

For nodules and cords that are not contracted, only observation is needed. Fingers that bend into the palm may require surgery to improve function. There are surgical techniques that can correct finger positions. Your surgeon will discuss the treatment methods that are best for your condition.

Considerations for Surgery

- The presence of a lump in the palm does not mean that surgery is required or that the disease will progress.
- Correction of finger position works best with milder contractures and with contractures that affect the base of the finger. Complete correction sometimes cannot be attained, especially of the middle and end joints in the finger.
- Skin grafts are sometime required to cover open areas over the fingers.
- The nerves that provide feeling to the fingertip are often intertwined with the cord.
- Splinting and hand therapy are often required after surgery to maximize and maintain the improvements in finger position and function.

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