

## Patient information factsheet

# Dupuytren's contracture

We have given you this factsheet because you have been diagnosed with a condition called Dupuytren's contracture. It explains what Dupuytren's contracture is, how it is treated and what the possible risks are. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

### What is Dupuytren's contracture?

Dupuytren's contracture, first recognised by French surgeon Guillaume Dupuytren in 1831, is a thickening of the deep tissues (fascia) in the hand, which pulls the fingers and thumb into the palm. It is most common in the ring and little finger, and may occur in one or both hands.

### Causes

The underlying cause is unknown. It often starts in middle age but can be found in people in their twenties. It is more common in men than women and tends to run in families.

### Treatment

Surgery is a common treatment for Dupuytren's contracture and involves removing the affected tissues. The surgery often leaves a zigzag scar and your wound may look unpleasant until the tissues start to heal.

Sometimes the overlaying skin is also removed, involving a skin graft from another part of your body. If this is necessary, your surgeon will discuss this with you before your operation.

The aim of the operation is to fully straighten your finger again. However, sometimes this is not possible due to changes in the joint, poor circulation or the length of time you have had the disease.

### Splinting

After your operation, we may fit you with a hand splint to wear at night to help keep your affected fingers straight.

It's important that you wear the splint to stretch the tissues. We will make the splint and any alterations in therapy outpatients.

### Exercises

We will give you exercises to do after your operation. It's important that you do these exercises to help your recovery. You must also remember to keep moving your shoulder, elbow and wrist after your operation to prevent these joints stiffening.

### Scar massage

Once your wound has completely healed, you can massage your scar to help it heal. Using an unperfumed cream, massage firmly and deeply across the line of your scar in circular movements.

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## Risks

### Scar

Occasionally, scars will contract or tighten. You can reduce this by wearing your splint and massaging your scar.

### Infection

This can occur after any operation. Lower your risk of infection by keeping your scar dry and clean during daily activities.

### Stiffness

A small number of people are sensitive to surgery and their hand may become swollen, painful and stiff after their operation.

### Nerve damage

There is a risk of small nerves in the hand being affected by the operation, causing permanent numbness or tingling. However, this is rare.

### Recurrence

Due to the disease process, it is possible for Dupuytren's contracture to return in the operated fingers.

### Extension

It is also possible for the disease to spread to other fingers on the same hand or your other hand.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns before or after your operation, please contact us.

Hand therapy team  
Therapy outpatients  
B level  
West Wing  
Southampton General Hospital  
Tremona Road  
Southampton  
SO16 6YD

Telephone: **023 8120 6459**

## Useful links

NHS: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

The British Dupuytren's Society: [www.dupuytren-society.org.uk](http://www.dupuytren-society.org.uk)

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