

Hand therapy treatment for children with camptodactyly

Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has been diagnosed with camptodactyly. It explains what camptodactyly is and the types of hand therapy treatment available. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is camptodactyly?

Camptodactyly (camp-toe-dak-tilly) is an abnormal bending of the middle joint of a finger which is not caused by an accident or injury.



What is the cause of camptodactyly?

The cause is not known but is thought to be due to an imbalance with the tendons (tough cords of tissue that connect muscles to bones) that bend and straighten the finger. It may also be because the skin or soft tissue are too tight or shortened in the palm of the hand. These tissues can tighten and cause the middle joint of the finger to become so stiff that it cannot be straightened (even when using your other hand to push it).

Camptodactyly is usually present at birth. Sometimes, you may only notice it when your child has a growth spurt, for example, when they are a teenager.

What are the signs and symptoms?

If your child has camptodactyly, they will have a bent finger that they cannot completely straighten. The middle joint of their affected finger(s) will be bent forwards into the palm of the hand. It is most common in the little finger but is sometimes seen in the ring or middle fingers and can affect both hands.

The amount the finger bends will be different in different children.

Does my child need a test to confirm the diagnosis?

Most of the time, we can make a diagnosis from looking at your child's hand without needing to do any further tests. We may need to arrange an x-ray of your child's affected finger(s) if this is not possible. If we need to do some further tests, we will discuss this with you when we see your child at the clinic.

What treatments are available?

There are a number of treatments for camptodactyly. The treatment we recommend for your child will depend on how severe their finger deformity is.

In mild cases, where the finger is only slightly bent and does not get worse over time, your child may not need any treatment.

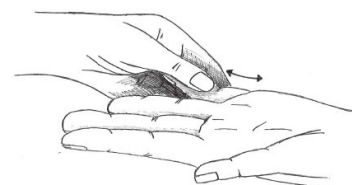
If your child's deformity is more severe, we may advise you treat this by massaging and stretching the fingers at home on a daily basis.

Massage

Before trying to stretch the finger(s), you should massage the joints and tissues to warm them up and help them to loosen. Older children may be able to do this for themselves, but otherwise a parent or carer should help.

To massage the affected fingers, please see instructions below.

1. Rub moisturising cream or massage oil into the palm side of the affected finger and hand. (Make sure your child is not allergic to any ingredients in the cream or oil you use to do this.)
2. Using a firm pressure, massage the area. (The massage should not be painful and should never break or harm the skin itself.)
3. Support the back of the affected finger with the fingers of your other hand.
4. Use your thumb to massage the front and sides of the affected finger.



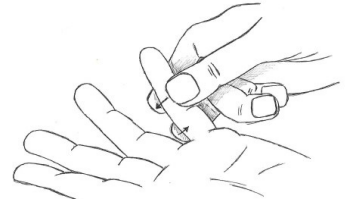
Complete the massage for _____ minutes and repeat _____ times a day.

Stretches

Younger children will need help from a parent or carer to stretch the affected finger(s) straight. Older children should be able to do this for themselves. It is important never to push directly onto a joint. The pressure should always be on the bones either side of a joint.

To perform the stretch, please see instructions on the next page.

1. Pinch the affected finger with your index and middle finger on the back of the finger (same side as the nail) and your thumb over the middle "pad" of the finger on the palm side.
2. With your thumb, apply firm but gentle pressure to push the finger straight (do this until your child can feel a stretch, but not so much that it is painful).



Complete the stretches _____ times, holding the stretch for _____ seconds, repeating _____ times a day.

Splint

For some children, we may also advise they wear a splint (supportive device made from mouldable plastic) to hold their affected finger(s) straight. We will explain how long your child should wear the splint in the day and overnight. The splint should be comfortable. Please contact us if your child finds it uncomfortable and we will adjust the splint. If you have any concerns, your child should stop wearing the splint until you see your child's therapist.

Your splint should be worn as follows:

Surgery

In rare cases, your child may need an operation to correct the camptodactyly. This is normally only necessary in extreme cases, where stretching and splinting has not made a difference, or if the deformity is seriously affecting your child's hand function (movement). Your child's surgeon will assess this at the clinic.

What happens if my child does not have treatment?

If your child does not have treatment for camptodactyly, the affected finger(s) are likely to stay bent forever. The degree of bend may worsen as your child grows, but it is unlikely to get straighter without treatment.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about camptodactyly or your child's treatment, please contact us.

Hand therapy department

Telephone: **023 8120 6459** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

There is an answering machine outside of these working hours.

Useful links

The British Society for Surgery of the Hand (BSSH)

Website: www.bssh.ac.uk

Reach (support group for children with congenital arm and hand problems)

Telephone: **0845 130 6225**

Website: www.reach.org.uk

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport

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