

Prairie



Dupuytren's Contracture

Shoulder, Elbow & Hand Center

What Is Dupuytren's Contracture?

Dupuytren's contracture is a disease that can lead to limited use of your hand. This may happen when certain tissue in the palm thickens and contracts. While it seldom causes pain, in advanced cases it can limit hand use by preventing you from straightening your fingers.

Inside Your Hand

Your palm contains a tough, fibrous layer of tissue called the **palmar fascia**. It forms a protective barrier between your skin and tendons (tissue that connects muscle to bone). The fascia gives your palm a flexible firmness, which secures the skin of your palm providing a good gripping surface. When the fascia thickens for unknown reasons it contracts (pulls in). Small, hard knots called nodules may form just under the skin near the base of the fingers. Hard bands also may form across the palm. Nodules, bands, and the contracting palmar fascia can make your fingers (most commonly the ring and little fingers) bend toward your palm.

Who Gets It?

People whose families come from northern European countries are the most likely to get Dupuytren's contracture. Symptoms most often appear in 50-to-60-year olds.

What Are The Signs and Symptoms?

Dupuytren's signs and symptoms start slowly and can progress over the years. Progression may stop before they limit hand use. Signs and symptoms include:

- A hard lump forming on palm
- Inability to place your palm flat on a surface
- Scar-like bands forming across your palm
- Fingers bent towards your palm
- Hand pain (less common)



Treating Dupuytren's Contracture

Surgery helps many patients regain a better range of finger motion. However, surgery is not a cure. Over time some patients can develop recurrent symptoms. Your doctor may suggest surgery if use of your hand is sharply limited. Talk with your doctor to find out if surgery is a good choice for you.

Your Surgery Experience

Surgery removes some of the palmar fascia. This can take a few hours. You may have **general anesthesia** (where you “sleep”) or arm block and be awake but drowsy during surgery. When surgery is complete, part of your incision may be left open. As you heal, it will close on its own. A thick bandage or cast will be placed over your hand and forearm to keep your hand flat during healing. You most likely will go home the same day of surgery.

Risks and Complications

Your doctor will give you details about the possible risks and complications of surgery. These may include:

- Stiff fingers
- Thick scarring on palm
- Numbness in hand
- Swelling around finger joints
- Impaired blood flow to hand
- Long-term pain in hand (rare)
- Loss of a finger (rare)

After Surgery

Keep your hand elevated for several days to reduce swelling. Take pain pills your doctor prescribed as needed. If you’re asked to use ice, follow your doctor’s advice. Your wound will be checked in about a week. You then may need to wear a splint. You’ll soon start hand therapy, exercise, and dressing changes that can help you heal.

As You Heal

By doing your exercises and wearing a splint if needed, you can speed up recovery. It may take three to four weeks before you have use of your hand. But with time, you will regain most of your hand function.