

ganglion cyst

what is a ganglion cyst?

A ganglion cyst is a firm, fluid filled lump that can suddenly appear on the front or back (70 percent) of the wrist or at the base of a finger. These cysts grow from normal tissue in the wrist and fingers, and range in size from a pea to a peach pit. Ganglion cysts are very common. They can occur after an injury, but many times it is not known why they grow. Ganglion cysts can change in size, and may go away on their own.

symptoms

Ganglion cysts do not usually cause any symptoms. It can sometimes be painful, especially when it first occurs. It may become more bothersome or enlarge with increased activity and use of the wrist. Some hand and wrist movements, such as grasping things, may also be difficult.

how a ganglion cyst develops

The wrist and hand are made up of many small bones that meet at joints. Tendons attach muscles to the bones at the joints. The tendons allow the joints to bend and straighten. Both tendons and joints are lined with tissue called **synovium**. This tissue produces a thick fluid that keeps the joints and tendons moving easily. Sometimes the tissue balloons out from the joint or tendons and forms a cyst. As the cyst fills with fluid and grows, it appears as a lump you can feel.

where ganglion cysts occur

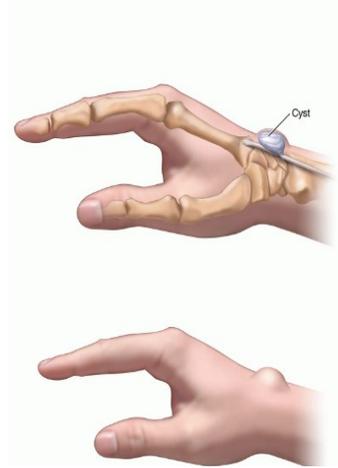
A ganglion cyst can occur anywhere on the hand near a joint. Cysts most commonly appear on the back or palm side of the wrist, or on the palm at the base of a finger. Your provider can usually diagnose a cyst by examining the lump. He or she may draw off a little fluid or order an X-ray to rule out other problems.

treating a ganglion cyst

Initial treatment is usually just observation. Many ganglion cysts will shrink and become painless without treatment. Some disappear altogether. If the cyst is unsightly or painful, or interferes with use of the hand or wrist, your provider can treat it or, remove it surgically if needed.

nonsurgical treatment

To shrink the cyst, your doctor may massage the fluid back into the surrounding tissue, or remove (aspirate) the fluid with a needle. If the cyst hurts, your doctor may also give you an injection of an anti-inflammatory, such as cortisone, to relieve the irritation.



surgery

If the cyst reappears after treatment or is determined to be severe enough, your doctor may remove it surgically. A small incision above the cyst is performed. A section of the tissue that lines the joint or tendon is removed along with the cyst. This helps prevent another cyst from forming. Usually your child can go home the same day of surgery. The wrist may be placed in a splint or brace for several days or a couple weeks. Usually range of motion exercises and gradual return to activities begins in 2-4 weeks.

common but harmless

Ganglion cysts are quite common. Many people get them at some time in their lives. These cysts are not dangerous, and often go away on their own. Ganglion cysts are never cancerous, and don't lead to other problems in the hand. They rarely they keep your child from doing the things they enjoy, such as playing sports or a musical instrument.

This information was provided by Dayton Children's Hospital. For more medically reviewed information written for parents, kids and teens visit childrensdayton.org. © 2016.