

FACTSHEET

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Trigger thumb

What is a trigger thumb?

A trigger thumb is a condition that occurs in babies and young children. The thumb develops into a bent shape and stays in that position. You may be able to feel a lump at the bottom of the thumb on the palm side. You may also notice a pop or a click when you straighten your child's thumb.

What causes a trigger thumb?

The cause is not known. It is not present at birth.

Is a trigger finger the same as a trigger thumb?

Trigger thumb should not be confused with a trigger finger. A trigger finger is a rare condition that is generally present at birth and is often linked to other disorders. A child with a trigger finger should be referred to a plastic or Orthopaedic Surgeon with a special interest in paediatric hand surgery.

Does a trigger thumb need treatment?

Trigger thumbs do not generally prevent children from using their hands. In 60% of cases, the thumb will become straight again.

Splints or taping your child's thumb will not help in most cases.

A photographic record of the progress of your child's trigger thumb may be helpful.

If your child still has a trigger thumb when they are 18 months old, or complains of pain, or is not using their

hand properly, your child may need a referral to see a Plastic or Orthopaedic Surgeon.

Surgical treatment

After the age of 18 months, surgical treatment may be recommended to straighten your child's thumb.

After the age of 4 years, a period of night splinting after surgery usually corrects the trigger thumb.

Remember:

- The majority of trigger thumbs will straighten without treatment.
- Splinting or taping is not recommended in most cases.
- A referral to a plastic or orthopaedic surgeon is recommended after 18 months of age.
- Progressive photographs of your child's thumb may be helpful.

Baek GH, Kim JH, Chung MS, Kang SB, Lee YH, Gong HS (2008) The natural history of pediatric trigger thumb. The Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery May;90(5):980-5.