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.