

Mucous Cyst

What is a mucous cyst?

A mucous cyst is a ganglion that appears on the back of a finger or thumb, near the end joint (D.I.P. joint in the finger, I.P. joint in the thumb). A ganglion is collection of fluid arising from the nearby joint.



Photo of a Mucous Cyst



Illustration of a Mucous Cyst

Why do they occur?

We don't know. All hand joints are filled with fluid. In some cases the fluid can escape through a small hole in the joint capsule. It is like a valve, so the fluid can escape into the cyst, but cannot return to the joint. They are more common in people with some wear-and-tear change in the joint.

What symptoms do they cause?

There is typically a lump on one side of the end joint. It may get bigger or smaller with time. It may periodically discharge yellow sticky fluid. It may cause the nail to be deformed, as it presses on the main part of the nail bed.

What treatments are possible?

Pricking the cyst is harmful, as it may introduce infection into the joint. The only treatment that may work is an operation. There are a number of side effects, so most people choose not to have surgery and to keep their mucous cyst.

The operation - read about the risks of surgery before you decide

This takes about 20 minutes. We commonly do this under Local Anaesthetic (with some injections around the base of the finger). We often use a tourniquet, to reduce bleeding while we operate. This is uncomfortable for the first minute, and then one gets used to the sensation. We cut through the skin, avoiding the nail bed and the extensor tendon. We remove the cyst, and its stalk; this reduces the risk of it coming back. We also nibble out any spurs of bone and put in skin stitches.

Main risks

Infection	This may be quite serious, as it can get into the joint, causing a "septic arthritis". This causes painful stiffness of the joint. We occasionally have to fuse these joints to salvage septic arthritis.
Damage to the nerves	(rare) leading to numbness in part of the digit

Stiffness	We encourage you to move all joints after the procedure.
Recurrence (30%)	Mucous cysts, or any ganglion, can come back, or another one can appear from the other side of the joint.
Scar sensitivity	Once the stitches are out, massaging the scar reduces this
Complex Regional Pain Syndrome.	Pain and stiffness after hand surgery
Nail bed damage	Leading to nail deformity.

After surgery you must

- Exercise all the joints that you can. Keep moving the fingers.
- Remove the bulky bandage at two days, leaving a clean sticky plaster.
- Keep the hand dry until the stitches come out (usually 10 to 15 days).
- Keep your hand elevated until the swelling goes down (often two days).
- Once the stitches are out, you should massage the scar.

Post-operative contacts:

- Bexhill DSU Mon-Fri 8am-6pm 01424 735673
- Conquest DSU Mon-Fri office hours 01424 755255 (ask for Richard Ticehurst ward)
- Eastbourne DSU Mon-Fri 8am-6pm 01323 414951
- Uckfield DSU Mon-Fri 8am-8pm 01825 769999 extn 5051
Sat mornings 01825 769999 extn 5051

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – details below.

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: esh-tr.palsh@nhs.uk - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: esh-tr.palse@nhs.uk - Telephone: **01323 435886**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Mrs Scarlett McNally	Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
Miss Miranda Champion	Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
Mr Hemant Thakral	Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
Mrs Sarah Sharp	Senior Physiotherapist

Next review date: July 2018

Responsible Clinician: Mrs Scarlett McNally, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon