

TRIGGER FINGER AND THUMB

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

WHAT IS IT?

It is a condition which happens as a result of a localised restriction to straightening a finger. This is caused by a thickening of the tendon and there is a mismatch between the size of the tendon and its sheath making it difficult for the tendon to pass through a pulley in the palm of the hand.

WHAT SYMPTOMS DOES IT CAUSE?

Usually bending the finger is normal but beyond a certain range of movement, the sufferer has difficulty straightening the bent finger. This often straightens suddenly and a ‘click’ may be felt. There may be some pain and sometimes a little lump can be felt at the point of obstruction. The digits most commonly affected are the ring and middle fingers and sometimes the thumb.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

The cause is usually unknown in adults. Sometimes it may be associated with certain medical conditions like diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or gout.

TREATMENT

This may consist of simply keeping the finger straight with a splint and the use of oral anti-inflammatory drugs. The recurrence rate is high.

A steroid injected into the tendon sheath is usually successful for early disease with minimal functional impairment.

If triggering is severe and/or injection has failed, surgical release gives the best long term relief.

You will be seen and assessed and if you are offered an operation, the following information may be useful.

THE OPERATION

The operation is done under local anaesthetic, this numbs the site and wears off after a few hours. The fingers may also go temporarily numb. A tourniquet may be used on the upper arm. A 2cm cut is made at the base of the affected finger in the palm. The thickened sheath is divided. You should then be able to move your finger freely and we are able to check this under direct vision. The wound is then closed with some stitches. The hand is then bandaged and rested in a sling to minimise swelling. The procedure takes about 15 minutes.

Please ensure that you remove watches from your wrists and all rings, false nails and nail varnish from your fingers before your appointment and that you wear a loose sleeved top.

Also ensure that you have someone to drive you home afterwards.

If you are on warfarin please contact the surgery for further information

POST-OP CARE

Use the sling for the first few days until you are feeling comfortable and you are sure there is little or no swelling in the fingers. Take the arm out occasionally to exercise the elbow and shoulder. At night keep the sling on and sleep in a semi-upright position or place the hand on some pillows to elevate it.

Start finger exercises immediately and repeat hourly. Fully straighten and bend the fingers for a few minutes every hour. This helps to prevent stiffness.

Please make an appointment at your own GP Practice to see your practice nurse to have a wound review, who will re-apply a light dressing in 6 days and another appointment with the Nurse to have your stitches removed in 12 days. There is **no restriction** to movement once the bandage is removed.

PAIN CONTROL

We recommend you take painkillers such as paracetamol as soon as you get home and then regularly for the first 48 hours.

We also recommend taking vitamin D for one month after surgery to help with healing and to reduce the risks of chronic regional pain syndrome.

RECOVERY

Some soreness, bruising and swelling is normal. The scar may be sensitive for 2-3 weeks. Most people are able to return to normal activities by that time. You can ask for a sick note from the surgeon if you need one.

COMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Any surgical procedure has an element of risk attached to it and occasionally things do not turn out as well as expected. Fortunately, with trigger finger release the risks are small and the outcomes usually very good.

There is a small risk of recurrence.

Serious infection is extremely rare, but you must take care to keep the dressings clean and dry. If you experience a lot of pain in the hand, swelling of the fingers, high fever or flu-like symptoms you should immediately seek advice. Minor, superficial infections may require antibiotics.

Damage to the small nerves and blood vessels on either side of the finger during the operation, causing numbness in the finger is uncommon as great care is taken to avoid them.

Scar tenderness can persist for several weeks but usually settles down in time.

Some patients who are not progressing satisfactorily because of persistent post-op pain, stiffness or finger swelling may require physiotherapy but this is unusual.

A rare complication of injury to the hand, including surgery is “chronic regional pain syndrome”. The hand is disproportionately painful and stiff with some swelling. You should seek advice promptly if you experience such symptoms. This can last for many months and is difficult to treat.

WHERE TO GET ADVICE

If you have any concerns during the post –op period you can get advice or help from one of these sources.

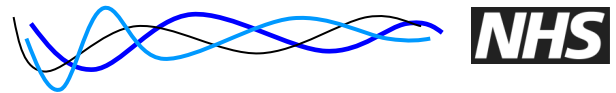
1. Contact Probus Surgical Centre first on 01726 885104;
2. Contact your GP Practice to speak to your Doctor or Practice Nurse;
3. Out of hours, contact NHS ‘111’; or
4. The A and E department of your local hospital.

Severe pain, excessive swelling or bandages that are too tight or bloody should prompt you to seek advice. Take this letter with you and insist that the dressings are removed and the wound inspected before redressing.

STUDENTS

We are a teaching and training practice. Sometimes medical students or doctors in training may wish to observe or participate in procedures or operations. They will always be supervised by a senior doctor and will only participate with your approval.

If you do not wish to be seen by trainees or students you are perfectly entitled to withhold your consent. Please let the Surgeon know.



Probus Surgical Centre

Help Us Help You Stay Safe

Important information when attending your appointment (updated June 2022)

* **REQUESTING SUPPORT** - if you require support to attend the appointment because of exceptional circumstances, please contact us on 01726 885104 to request this ahead of your appointment (please use the number on your appointment letter) – authorisation will be given as appropriate.

Prior to attending your appointment:

- Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap & water for 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub

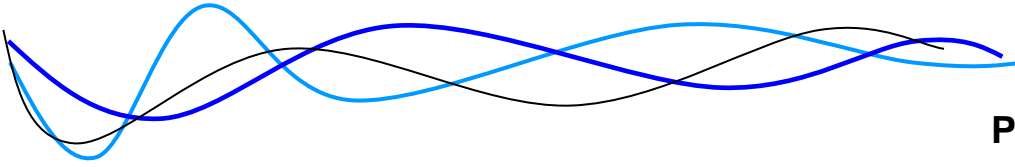
Please inform us, before your appointment if:

- **You have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or are waiting for a COVID-19 test result**
- **You think you may have symptoms of COVID-19:**
 - A high temperature or shivering (chills) – a high temperature means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
 - A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
 - A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
 - Shortness of breath
 - Feeling tired or exhausted
 - An aching body
 - A headache
 - A sore throat
 - A blocked or runny nose
 - Loss of appetite
 - Diarrhoea
 - Feeling sick or being sick

Attending your appointment:

Please use the hand sanitiser available in the Reception & Surgical Centre before and after your appointment.

We ask that all patients and visitors wear a face mask or covering when entering the building. If exempt, please advise staff.



Probus Surgical Centre

"To improve the health and well-being of those we care for"

Directions to Probus Surgical Centre

Probus Surgical Centre, Tregony Road, Probus, Truro, TR2 4JZ

From North Cornwall

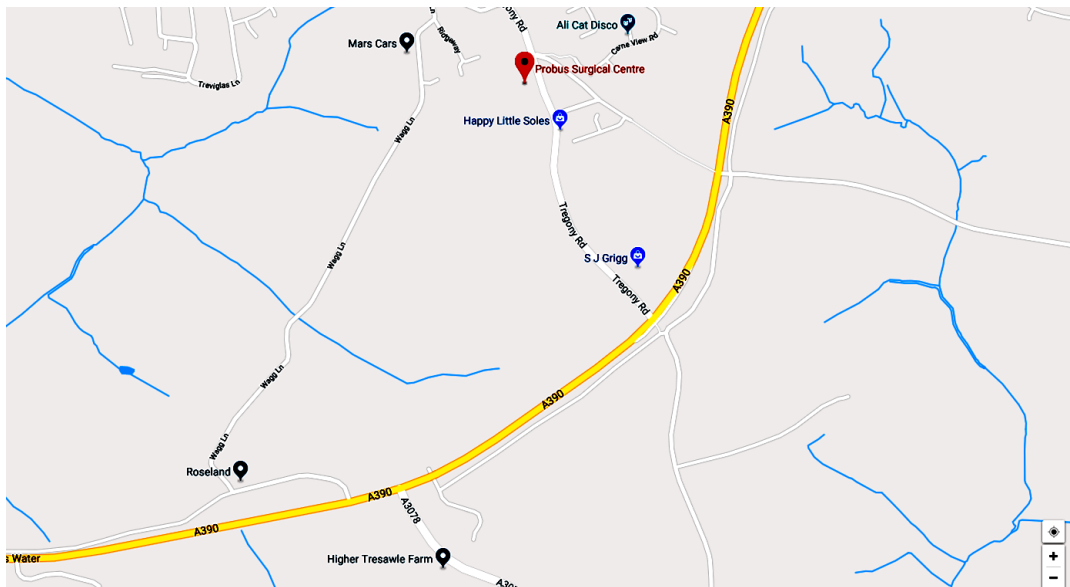
From Fraddon take the Grampound Road direction. Drive through Grampound Road and continue until you come to the main A390. (Then follow directions below)

From West Cornwall

From Truro follow the road for St Austell. Drive through Tresillian and continue on the Probus bypass (A390), you will pass the turning on the right for Tregony (A3078), continue on the A390, and take the next turning on the left, Tregony Road (opposite a large layby). Continue up this hill, passing S J Griggs Garage on your right, then Wainhomes. Continue on Tregony Road, until you reach Probus Surgery and Surgical Centre, take the second entrance into the car park.

From East Cornwall

From St Austell follow the Truro Road (A390). Drive through Grampound and continue until you reach the new roundabout at the start of the Probus Bypass. Take the first exit, continuing on the A390. Take the 2nd exit on the right onto Tregony Road (opposite a large layby). Continue up this hill, passing S J Griggs Garage on your right, then Wainhomes. Continue on Tregony Road, until you reach Probus Surgery and Surgical Centre, take the second entrance into the car park.



TAP – Transport Access People – Community transport service (Subsidiary of Age UK Cornwall & Isles of Scilly)

This is a door to door service and a small charge will be made – payable to the driver on the day of your journey. To arrange non-emergency transport for your healthcare appointment you can call: **Cornwall residents – 01872 223388 Devon residents – 08450 53910**