

# GANGLION CYST

## What is a ganglion cyst?

A ganglion cyst is a swollen, closed sac under the skin. The sac is attached to the sheath of a tendon or may be attached to a joint. The cyst contains fluid similar to the fluid that is in your joints. It can vary in size from a small pea to a golf ball. Ganglion cysts most often occur on the wrist, at the end joint of a finger, or at the base of a finger. They may also occur on the foot.

## How does it occur?

The cause of ganglion cysts is not known.

## What are the symptoms?

You may feel discomfort or pain. Sometimes the area of the cyst becomes swollen or disfigured.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider may stick a needle into the cyst to take a sample of the fluid inside it.

## How is it treated?

Unless a cyst hurts, it does not need to be treated. If it does hurt, put ice on it for 20 to 30 minutes 3 or 4 times a day, or at least once daily, until it becomes less painful. Taking an anti-inflammatory drug, such as aspirin or ibuprofen, may also help.

The fluid can be removed with a needle, but the cysts tend to fill up again with fluid.

Do not try to smash the cyst with a heavy object. Even if this home remedy succeeds at first, the cyst will almost always fill up again with fluid. In addition, you could seriously damage your wrist or finger.

If a ganglion cyst is painful, limits activity, or is unsightly, it can be surgically removed. Surgery to remove the cyst requires making a small cut through the skin. The cut usually heals quickly and leaves a small scar.

## How long will the effects last?

Sometimes cysts eventually go away whether they are treated or not. If your cyst is painful or interferes with your activities, you may need to have surgery. Even with surgical treatment, a cyst may come back.

## How can I take care of myself?

Follow the treatment recommended by your healthcare provider.

## When can I return to my sport or activity?

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to your sport will be measured by how soon your joint recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to get better.

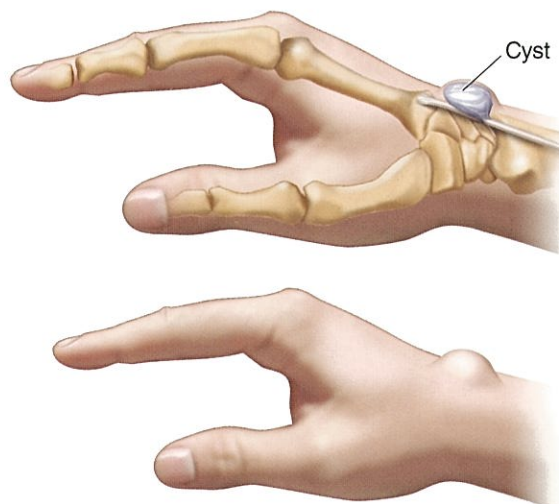
If you have a wrist ganglion, you may return to your sport or activity when you can do your activities without pain. You may need to wear a wrist brace or have your wrist taped. In sports such as gymnastics, you will not be able to participate fully until you can bear weight on your wrist while tumbling without pain. In sports such as baseball or tennis, it is important that your wrist does not hurt when you are holding the bat or racquet while doing your swing.

## How can I help prevent ganglion cysts?

There is no known way to prevent these cysts because their cause is not known.

WRIST/HAND

## GANGLION CYST



# GANGLION CYST REMOVAL (GANGLIONECTOMY)

## What is a ganglion cyst removal?

Ganglion cyst removal, called a ganglionectomy, is a procedure in which your healthcare provider removes a cyst from your hand, wrist, foot, or other part of your body. A ganglion cyst is a swollen, closed sac under the skin. The sac may develop from may develop from the sheath of a tendon or joint. The cyst contains fluid similar to joint fluid.

Alternatives to this procedure include:

- taking out the fluid with a needle or a syringe, with or without a cortisone injection
- choosing not to have treatment, recognizing the risks of your condition

You should ask your provider about these choices.

## How do I prepare for a ganglionectomy?

Plan for your care and recovery after the operation, especially if you are to have general anesthesia. Arrange for someone to drive you home afterwards. Allow for time to rest and try to find other people to help you with your day-to-day duties.

Follow your provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers heal more slowly after surgery. They are also more likely to have breathing problems during surgery. For this reason, if you are a smoker, you should quit at least 2 weeks before the procedure. It is best to quit 6 to 8 weeks before surgery. Also, your wounds will heal much better if you do not smoke after the surgery.

Follow the instructions your healthcare provider gives you. Do not eat or drink anything after midnight or the morning before the procedure. Do not even drink coffee, tea, or water after midnight.

## What happens during the procedure?

You will be given a general, regional, or local anesthetic. Local and regional anesthetics numb part of the body while you remain awake. You may be given a sedative along with a local or regional anesthetic to relax you and reduce anxiety. A general anesthetic relaxes your muscles and puts you to sleep. All three types of anesthesia should keep you from feeling pain during the operation.

Your healthcare provider will cut around the cyst and remove it. Your provider will then close the cut with stitches.

## What happens after the procedure?

You can go home the day you have the surgery. A bulky dressing, with or without a splint, may cover the area where you had the cyst to protect it.

Your healthcare provider will recommend when you should come back to get the stitches out, often in 1 to 2 weeks.

You should ask your provider what other steps you should take.

## What are the benefits of this procedure?

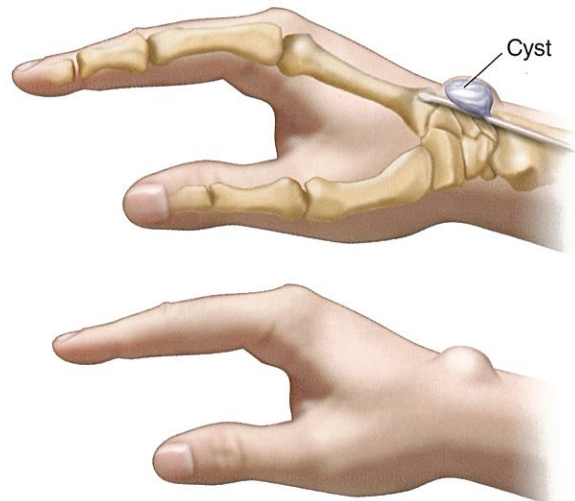
The hand, wrist, foot, or other part of your body that had the cyst may return to normal function. The area may also feel and look better.

## What are the risks associated with this procedure?

There are some risks when you have anesthesia. Discuss these risks with your healthcare provider.

A local or regional anesthetic may not numb the area quite enough and you may feel some minor discomfort. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the drug used in this type of anesthesia. Local or regional anesthesia is considered safer than general anesthesia.

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The cyst may come back.

There is a small risk of infection and bleeding. However, the cut usually heals quickly without any problems.

In rare cases, nerves or blood vessels in the area may be damaged.

The healing cut could form an unsightly scar. Usually the scar is not noticeable in the long run.

You should ask your provider how these risks apply to you.

### When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- you have increasing pain despite taking the pain medicine recommended by your provider
- you notice pus; drainage; or increasing redness, swelling, and tenderness near the cut and stitches

Call during office hours if:

- you have questions about the procedure or its result
- you want to make another appointment