



What is a Ganglion?

Ganglion cysts are very common lumps in the hand and wrist. They grow from a joint or a tendon sheath. They are cysts filled with clear sticky fluid produced by a damaged ligament or tendon sheath. The most common locations are the back of the wrist the front of the wrist, the base of the finger on the palm side where it joins the hand. The cause of these cysts is unknown although they may occur as a result of mechanical stress to the joint or due to arthritis. They can occur in patients of all ages. These cysts may change in size or even spontaneously disappear. Ganglions may be painful at times. These cysts are not cancerous, do not cause any damage and will not spread to other areas.



How are ganglions diagnosed?

Usually the diagnosis is obvious to your doctor however sometimes it is necessary to confirm the diagnosis particularly if the symptoms are a little unusual. Sometimes the ganglion is so small that it causes pain but cannot be seen or felt by the doctor. The simplest test for a ganglion is an ultrasound examination. This will demonstrate most ganglions and will also identify where the ganglion is coming from. If there is a possibility of the ganglion occurring as a result of some arthritis then a simple X-ray may also be needed. If the ganglion is more complex or more information is required then sometimes an MRI is required.

How are ganglions treated?

Ganglions may be treated with rest and splinting if the symptoms are mild or may need no treatment at all. Sometimes the ganglion fluid can be aspirated. This requires placing a needle into the cyst, which can be performed in most office settings. Aspiration is a very simple procedure, but recurrence of the cyst is common. If non-surgical options fail to provide relief then surgery may be required. Surgery involves removing the cyst along with a portion of the joint capsule or tendon sheath. Removing this tissue that causes the ganglion results in a lower recurrence rate. In the case of wrist ganglion cysts, both traditional open and arthroscopic techniques usually yield good results. Your surgeon will discuss the best treatment options for you. Surgery is usually performed under a local anaesthetic as a day case procedure.