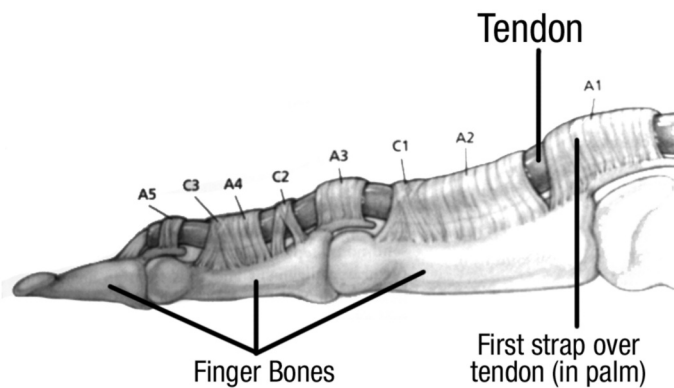




CONDITION

What is Trigger finger or thumb?

In this common, uncomfortable condition the affected finger or thumb clicks or catches as it is bent towards the palm.



A side view of a finger to show the tendons and straps

What is Triggering?

In this common, uncomfortable condition the affected finger or thumb clicks or catches as it is bent towards the palm. This occurs as the smooth gliding of the tendon is held up by a thickening of the first strap holding the tendon down next to the bone (see picture on the left). Sometimes the strap is so tight the finger 'locks' down into the palm and has to be physically straightened using the other hand.

What causes Triggering?

It is not known what causes this condition but it is common in patients with diabetes. It can also occur in patients with rheumatoid arthritis, gout and after unaccustomed loading of the tendons.

What are the symptoms?

Pain at the base of the finger in the palm or over the front of the thumb as it joins the palm is common. The finger or thumb clicks or catches as it moves and can become 'stuck' in a bent position. The joints further down the finger or thumb can become stiff if the symptoms go on for some time.

How is the diagnosis made?

A good description of the symptoms and a careful examination is often sufficient to make the diagnosis.

What is the treatment for Triggering?

If the symptoms are mild then rest and the use of painkillers can allow things to settle down. Local anaesthetic and steroid injections between the tendon and the strap can be successful in resolving the symptoms in up to 70% of patients but this rate is lower in diabetics. Patients with resistant symptoms will require a small operation to release the first strap over the tendon and free up the tendon movements.