

Trigger Finger: What You Need to Know

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If you have been diagnosed with trigger finger or flexor tendonitis, here are several facts you should know about your condition:

- 1 This problem is caused by inflammation and thickening of the tendon or string that bends your finger down. The thickening does not allow the tendon to glide smoothly through a special tunnel called a pulley, like a truck driving through a tunnel that is too small.
- 2 Some patients have only **pain and soreness**, some patients have only **clicking and popping**, and some patients have both. In extreme cases, the finger can get **stuck down** and requires help from the other hand to get un-stuck.
- 3 If your symptoms are mild and your finger is not getting stuck often, **it is OK to live with this condition**. You will not do damage to anything by living with it, and **the condition can resolve on its own**. However, if your finger gets stuck down and will not straighten, or if your pain is too severe, you should see your doctor. Patients who want to live with trigger finger may consider icing the sore spot, taking anti-inflammatory medication, and avoiding activities that make the trigger finger worse.
- 4 If the symptoms are more severe and painful, your primary care doctor or hand specialist may perform a **steroid injection**. Steroid is a medication that settles down the inflammation that causes the thickening of the tendon, and in almost all patients it will provide relief of pain and popping, and in about 50% of the time can cure trigger finger forever. Sometimes a second injection can be performed 4 months after the first injection if the pain returns.
- 5 Some patients will continue to have pain and popping even though injection gave some relief. For these patients, a hand surgeon such as Dr. Johnny Nelson will likely recommend **trigger finger release surgery**. This is a very small procedure where a small incision is made and the tunnel is opened, allowing the tendon to glide freely.
 - The surgery is outpatient, meaning **you will go home right after the surgery** is performed.
 - The surgery can be performed with you **wide awake**, much like going to the dentist, or you can have **sleeping medicine** administered to relax you during the procedure.
 - Dr. Nelson usually applies a **soft bandage** that is kept in place for **two days**, which is removed and you can begin showering and washing your hand again.
 - Dr. Nelson usually uses absorbable sutures, meaning you will not need to have any sutures removed.
 - You can go back to **light activities on the day of surgery** (eating, typing, food preparation), but should wait 10-14 days until the incision is healed before you do heavy gripping (yard work, lifting weights).

