

## What Is Dupuytren's Contracture?

Dupuytren's contracture is a disease that can lead to limited use of the hand. This may happen when certain tissue in the palm thickens. While it rarely causes pain, Dupuytren's contracture can make it hard to straighten the fingers.

### Who Gets It?

People whose families come from northern European countries are more likely to get Dupuytren's contracture. Also, men are more likely to get this problem than women.



▶▶ Dupuytren's can make it hard to do simple actions like shaking someone's hand.

### What Are the Signs and Symptoms?

Dupuytren's signs and symptoms start slowly. They can steadily progress. But they also may stop before they limit hand use. Signs and symptoms include:

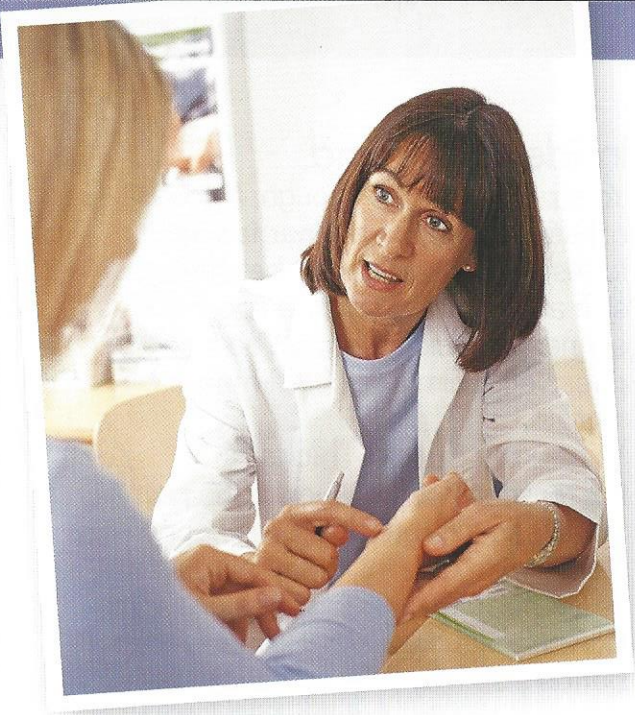
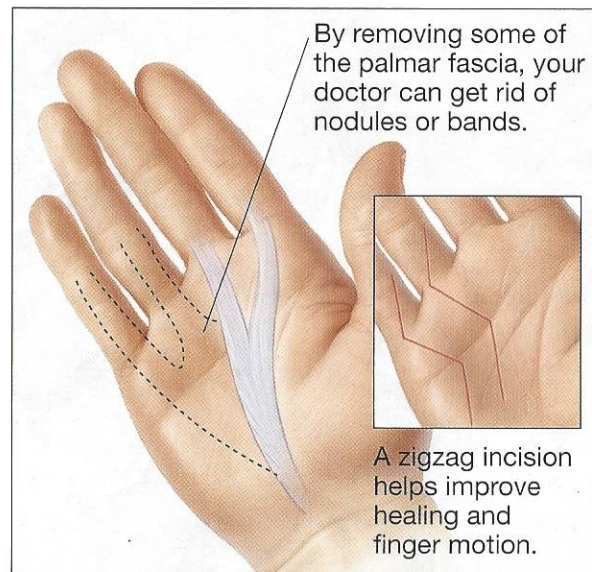
- A hard lump forming on your palm
- Inability to place your palm flat on a surface
- Scarlike bands forming across your palm
- Fingers bent toward your palm
- Hand pain (less common)

## Treating Dupuytren's Contracture

A common way to treat Dupuytren's is with surgery. Symptoms can recur in a few years, but surgery helps many patients regain a better range of finger motion. Your doctor may suggest surgery if use of your hand is greatly limited. Talk with your doctor to find out if surgery is a good choice for you.

### Your Surgery Experience

Surgery removes some of the palmar fascia. This can take a few hours. You may be awake but drowsy or completely asleep during surgery. In some cases, an enzyme is injected to break apart thickened tissue. In most cases, though, a "zigzag" incision is made to reach the fascia. When surgery is complete, part of the incision may be left open to allow drainage. It will close on its own as you heal. A thick bandage or cast will be placed over your hand and forearm. You will likely go home the same day.



### After Surgery

In the first few days, keep your hand elevated to reduce swelling. Also, take any pain pills you may have been prescribed. If you're asked to use ice, follow your doctor's advice. In about a week, your stitches will be removed. You then may need to wear a splint. Soon, you'll start hand therapy and exercises that can help you heal.

### Risks and Complications

**!** Your doctor will discuss the risks and complications of surgery with you. These may include:

- Stiff fingers
- Thick scarring on palm
- Numbness in hand
- Swelling around finger joints
- Impaired blood flow to hand
- Long-term pain in hand (rare)



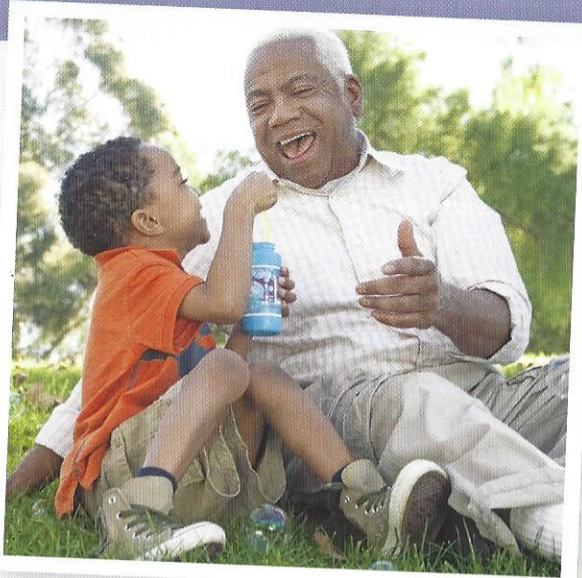
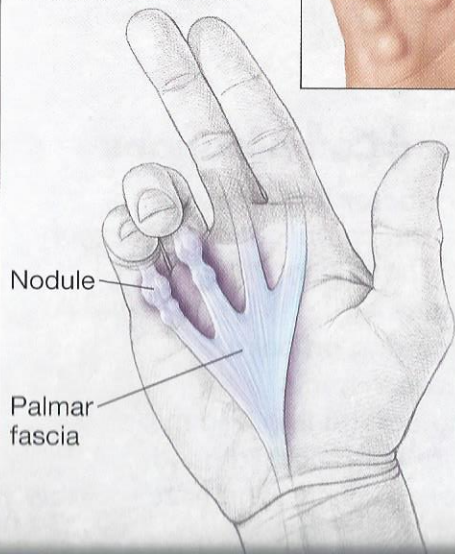
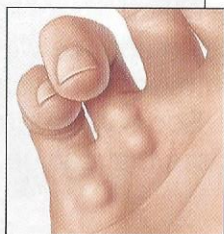
## Inside Your Hand

Your palm contains a tough, fibrous layer of tissue called the **palmar fascia**. It forms a protective barrier between your skin and tendons (cordlike fibers that connect muscle to bone). The fascia gives your palm a flexible firmness.

### When the Fascia Thickens

For reasons not fully known, the palmar fascia can thicken. When this happens, it contracts (pulls in). Small, hard knots called **nodules** may form just under the skin near the base of the fingers. Hard **bands** also may form across the palm. Nodules, bands, and the contracting palmar fascia can make your fingers bend toward your palm. The ring and little fingers are most often affected.

**Nodules on the palmar fascia can cause the ring and little fingers to bend toward your palm.**



### As You Heal

By taking an active role in your care, you can help ensure the success of your treatment. Do your exercises as prescribed by your doctor or hand therapist. Also, if you have a splint, wear it as directed. These things will help speed up recovery. It may take a few weeks before you have use of your hand. But with time, you will regain most of your hand function.

This brochure is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Only your doctor can diagnose and treat a medical problem.  
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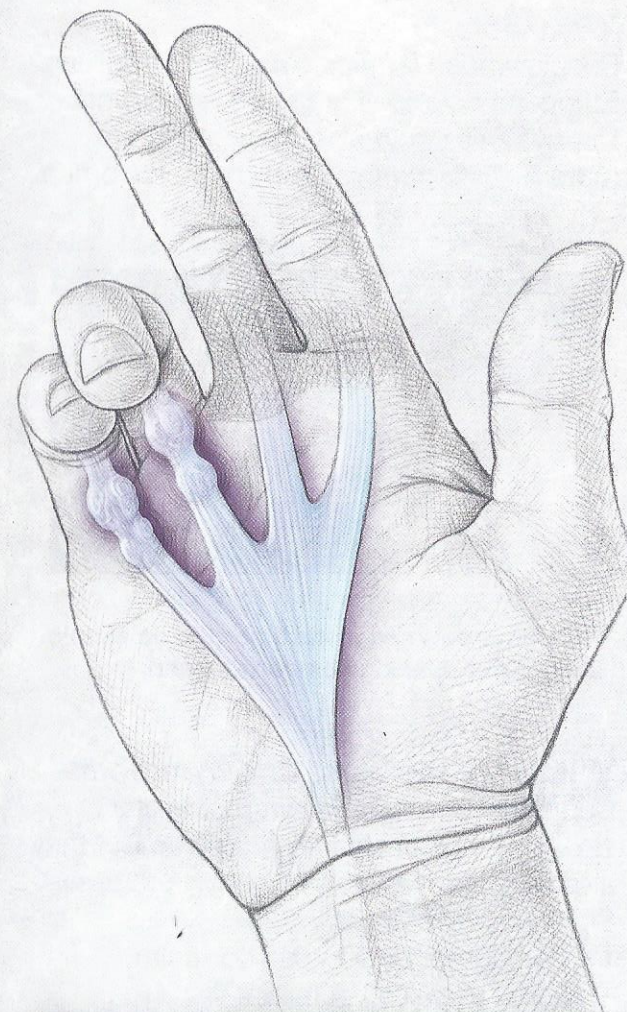
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## DUPUYTREN'S CONTRACTURE



**Restoring Movement  
in Your Hand**



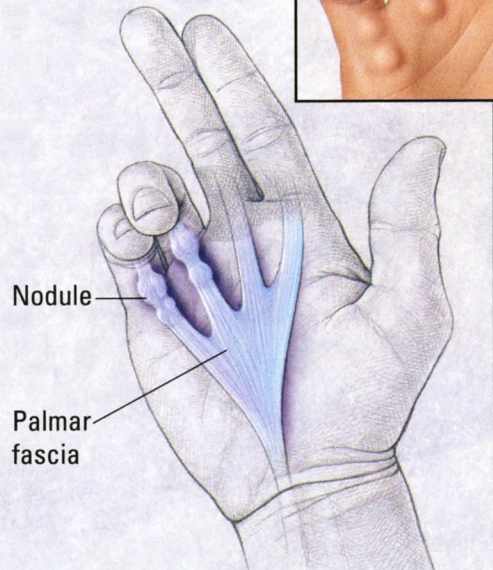
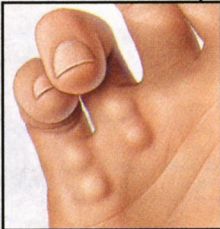
## Inside Your Hand

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### When the Fascia Thickens

For reasons not fully known, the palmar fascia can thicken. When this happens, it contracts (pulls in). Small, hard knots called **nodules** may form just under the skin near the base of the fingers. Hard bands also may form across the palm. Nodules, bands, and the contracting palmar fascia can make your fingers (especially the ring and little fingers) bend toward your palm.

Nodules on the palmar fascia can cause the ring and little fingers to bend toward your palm.



## As You Heal

By doing your exercises and wearing a splint if needed, you can speed up recovery. It may take a few weeks before you have use of your hand. But with time, you will regain most of your hand function.



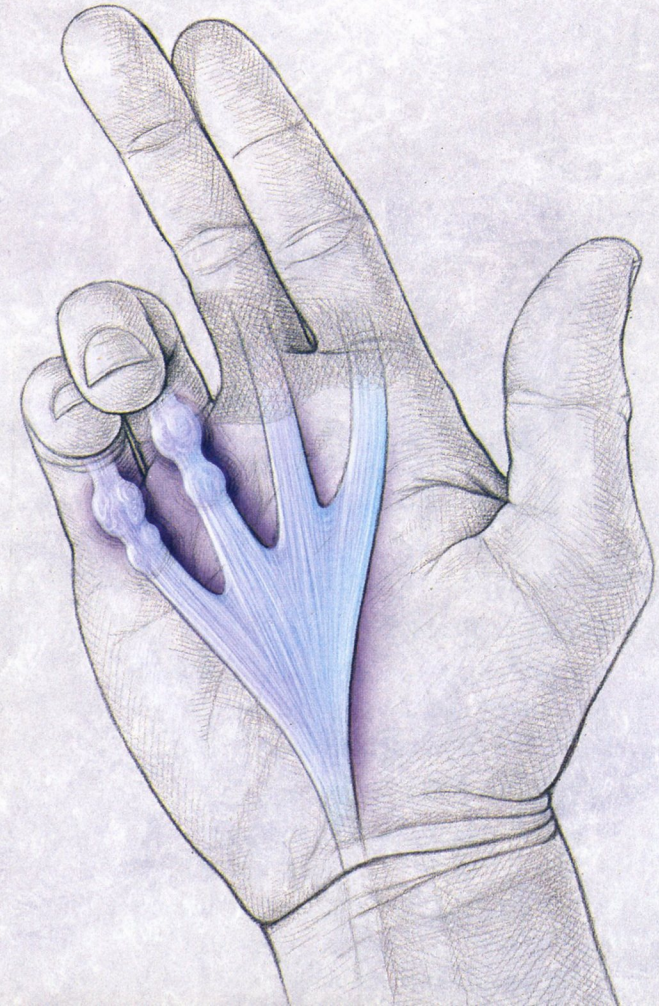
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# Dupuytren's Contracture



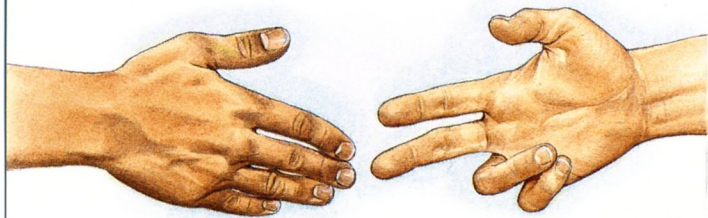


# What Is Dupuytren's Contracture?

Dupuytren's contracture is a disease that can lead to limited use of your hand. This may happen when certain tissue in the palm thickens. While it often doesn't cause pain, it can make it hard to straighten your fingers.

## Who Gets It?

People whose families come from northern European countries are the most likely to get Dupuytren's contracture. Symptoms most often appear in 50- to 60-year-old men. But some women also may have this problem.



Dupuytren's can make simple tasks like shaking hands awkward.

## What Are the Signs and Symptoms?

Dupuytren's signs and symptoms start slowly. They can steadily progress. But they also may stop before they limit hand use. Signs and symptoms include:

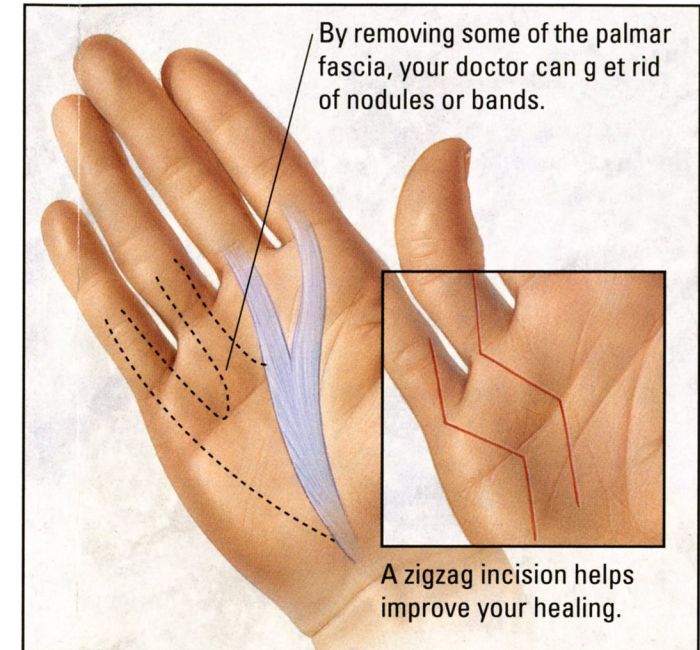
- A hard lump forming on your palm
- Inability to place your palm flat on a surface
- Scarlike bands forming across your palm
- Fingers bent toward your palm
- Hand pain (less common)

# Treating Dupuytren's Contracture

The only way to treat Dupuytren's is surgery. It's not a cure. Symptoms can recur in a few years. But surgery helps many patients regain a better range of finger motion. Your doctor may suggest surgery if use of your hand is sharply limited. Talk with your doctor to find out if surgery is a good choice for you.

## Your Surgery Experience

Surgery removes some of the palmar fascia. This can take a few hours. You may be awake, but drowsy, during surgery. Or, you may have **general anesthesia** (where you "sleep"). Your doctor may use a zigzag-shaped incision to reach the fascia. A zigzag allows better healing and finger motion. When surgery is complete, part of your incision may be left open to help drainage. As you heal, it will close on its own. A thick bandage or cast will be placed over your hand and forearm. You most likely will go home the same day of surgery.



## After Surgery

In the first few days, keep your hand elevated to reduce swelling. And take any pain pills your doctor may have prescribed. If you're asked to use ice, follow your doctor's advice. In about a week, your stitches will be removed. You then may need to wear a splint. Soon, you'll start hand therapy and exercises that can help you heal.

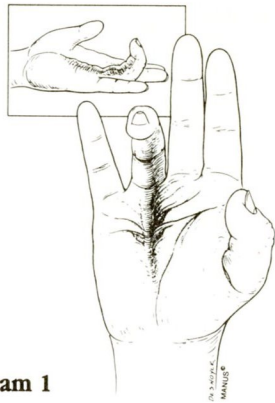


## Risks and Complications

Your doctor will give you details about the possible risks and complications of surgery. These may include:

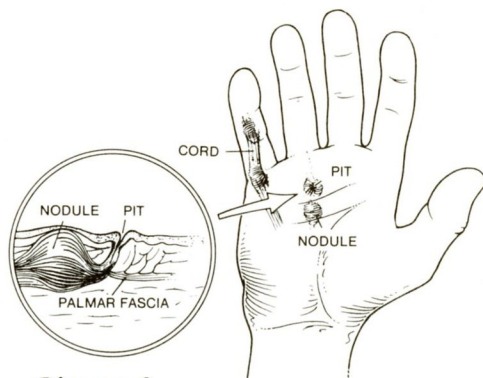
- Stiff fingers
- Thick scarring on palm
- Numbness in hand
- Swelling around finger joints
- Impaired blood flow to hand
- Long-term pain in hand (rare)





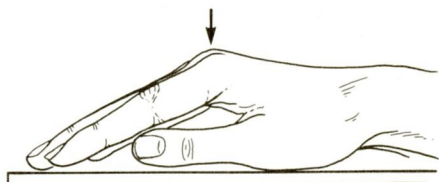
**Diagram 1**

In serious cases of Dupuytren's disease, a cord forms beneath the skin that prevents the affected finger from being fully straightened.



**Diagram 2**

Dupuytren's disease usually shows up as a small lump or pit in the palm of the hand.



**Diagram 3**

Dupuytren's disease is usually noticed when the palm cannot be placed flat on an even surface.

**Brochures available in the  
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- Arthritis of the Basilar Joint of the Thumb
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- Ganglion Cysts
- Hand Surgery
- Lateral Epicondylitis (Tennis Elbow)
- Trigger Finger/Trigger Thumb

**DUPUYTREN'S  
DISEASE**





**What is it?** Dupuytren's disease is an abnormal thickening of the palm that limits movement of the fingers. In serious cases, a cord forms beneath the skin that stretches from the palm to the base of the fingers. The cord causes the fingers to bend into the palm so they cannot be fully extended (see Diagram 1). Sometimes, the disease will affect other areas of the body — such as the knuckles of the fingers or the soles of the feet.

The cause of Dupuytren's is unknown and there is no *permanent* cure. But, the disease is harmless and painless.

**Who gets it?** Dupuytren's disease mostly affects white people with ancestors from Northern Europe. It occurs more often in men than in women, and usually starts after age 40. In many cases, the disease runs in families.

Some people may develop a more severe form of Dupuytren's disease. These may be people who:

- Develop the disease at a young age
- Have the disease in areas other than the hand
- Have a history of liver disease caused by alcohol abuse
- Take medications to stop seizures from occurring

Injuries to the hand have not been directly linked to causing the disease.

**Signs and symptoms.** Dupuytren's disease usually shows up as a small lump or pit in the palm. This tends to occur near the crease of the hand that is closest to the base of the ring and little fingers (see Diagram 2). With time, the cord may develop between the palm and the fingers.

The disease is usually noticed when the palm cannot be placed flat on an even surface, such as a table top (see Diagram 3). In severe cases, drawing of the fingers into the palm interferes with everyday activities, like washing hands, wearing gloves, and putting hands in pockets.

### How does the disease develop?

- The disease most often begins in the palm of the hand at the base of the ring or little fingers.
- The lump or pit may show up months or even years before the cord develops from the palm to the fingers.
- Having the disease in both hands is common.
- Drawing of the fingers into the hand can occur at the joints at the base of the fingers, or the joints in the fingers.
- The skin may be involved with the disease, but the tendons in the hand are not affected.

**Treatment.** There is no permanent cure for Dupuytren's disease. Surgery can relieve the bending of the fingers into the palm, but the condition can return with time. The goal of surgery for Dupuytren's disease is to restore normal hand movement. Your doctor should advise you on whether surgery is recommended in your case.

Some considerations on surgery:

- Presence of the lump in the hand does not mean that surgery is required.
- Bending of the fingers into the palm at the base of the fingers is usually correctable by surgery.
- Surgery may not completely relieve bending of the fingers at the joints in the fingers.
- It is important to remember that surgery is not a permanent cure for this disease. After surgery, thickening of the palm and development of the cord may return in the same place, or at a new place within the hand.

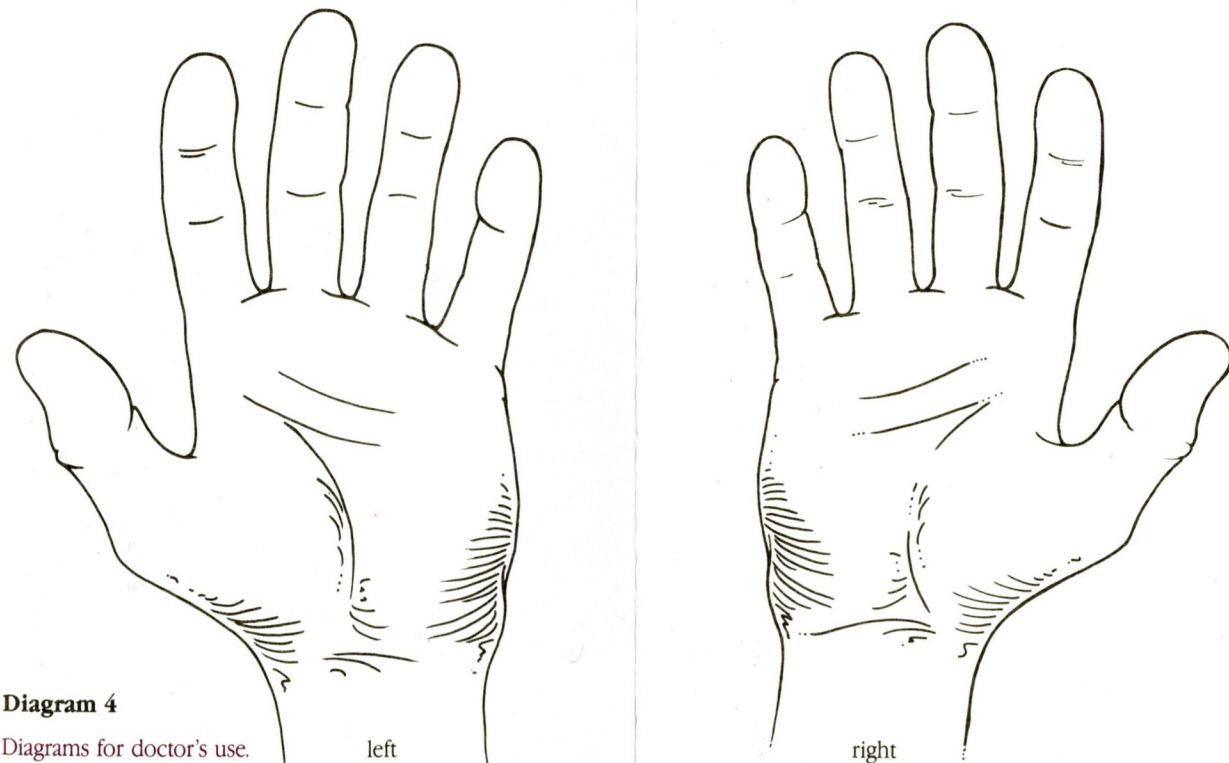


Diagram 4

Diagrams for doctor's use.

left

right

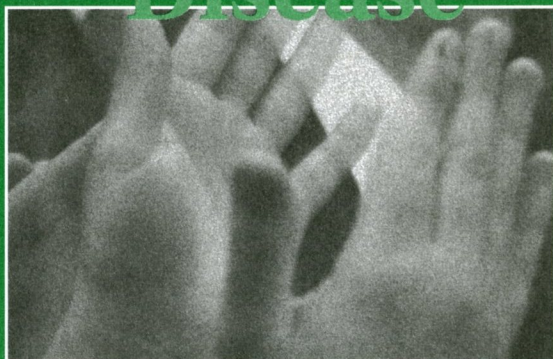


**Treatment.** There is no permanent cure for Dupuytren's disease. Surgery can relieve the bending of the fingers into the palm, but the condition can return with time. The goal of surgery for Dupuytren's disease is to restore the use of the fingers. Your doctor should advise you on whether surgery is recommended in your case.

Some considerations on surgery:

- Presence of the lump in the hand does not mean that surgery is required.
- Bending of the fingers into the palm at the base of the fingers is usually correctable by surgery.
- Surgery may not completely relieve bending of the fingers at the joints in the fingers.
- It is important to remember that surgery is not a permanent cure for this disease. After surgery, thickening of the palm and development of the cord may return in the same place, or at a new place within the hand.
- Sometimes skin grafts are needed to cover open areas in the fingers.
- Sometimes splints are used after surgery to help keep the fingers straight.
- A hand therapist may help with your post-operative care to help control swelling and to help with finger motion.

## Dupuytren's Disease



### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of ASSH is to advance the science and practice of hand surgery through education, research and advocacy on behalf of patients and practitioners.



AMERICAN SOCIETY for SURGERY OF THE HAND

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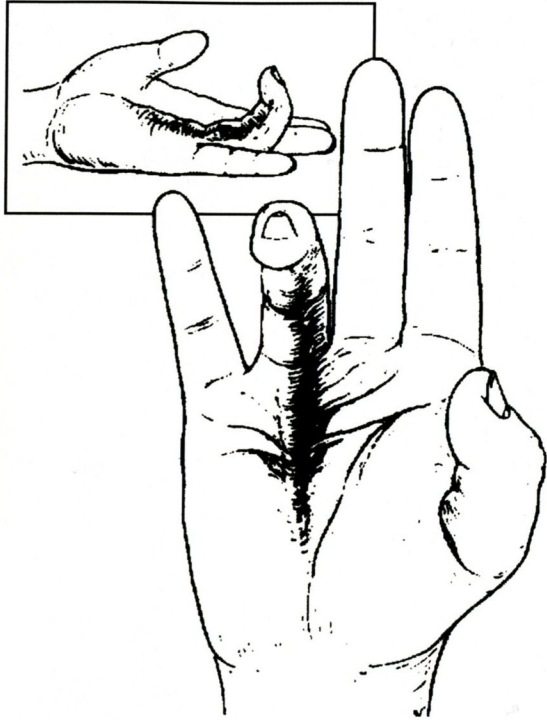
## Dupuytren's Disease



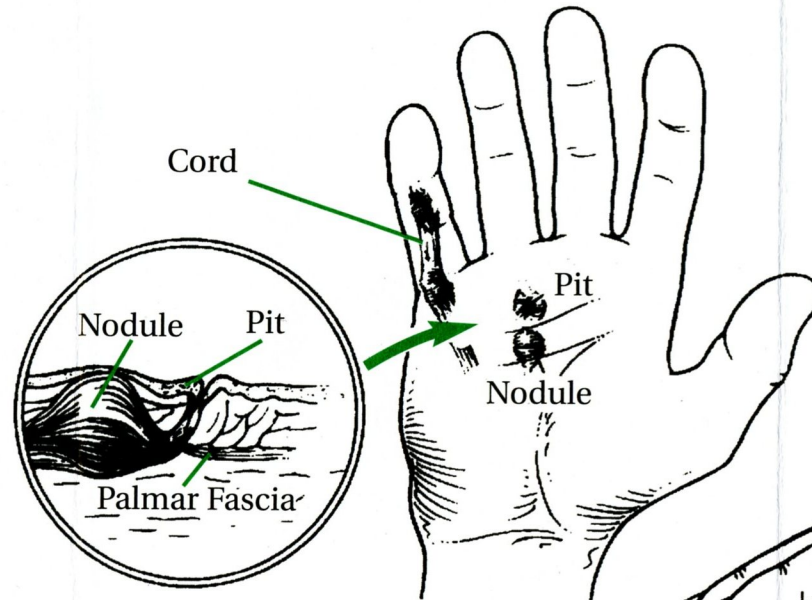
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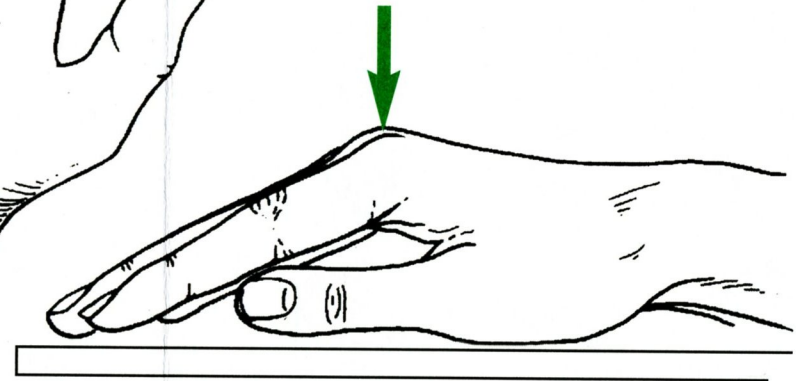
**Figure 1** In serious cases of Dupuytren's disease, a cord forms beneath the skin that prevents the affected finger from being fully straightened.



**Figure 2** Dupuytren's disease usually shows up as a small lump or pit in the palm of the hand.



**Figure 3** Dupuytren's disease is usually noticed when the palm cannot be placed flat on an even surface.



**What is it?** Dupuytren's disease is an abnormal thickening of the fascia (the tissue between the skin and the tendons in the palm) that may limit movement of one or more fingers. In some patients, a cord forms beneath the skin that stretches from the palm into the fingers. The cord can cause the fingers to bend into the palm so they cannot be fully straightened (see *Figure 1*). Sometimes, the disease will cause thickening over the knuckles of the finger. It can also occur in the soles of the feet.

**What causes it?** The cause of Dupuytren's is unknown and there is no permanent cure. The disease is usually painless. This is a non-cancerous condition. Dupuytren's disease mostly affects white people with ancestors from Northern Europe. It occurs more often in men than in women, and usually starts after age 40. In many cases, the disease runs in families.

Some people may develop a more severe form of Dupuytren's disease. These may be people who:

- Develop the disease at a young age
- Have the disease in areas other than the hand

**Injuries to the hand have not been directly linked to causing the disease.**

**Signs and symptoms.** Dupuytren's disease occurs slowly. It is usually noticed as a small lump or pit in the palm. This tends to occur near the crease of the hand that is closest to the base of the ring and little fingers (see *Figure 2*). With time, a cord may develop between the palm and the fingers.

The disease is usually noticed when the palm cannot be placed flat on an even surface, such as a tabletop (see *Figure 3*). In severe cases, drawing of the fingers into the palm interferes with everyday activities, like washing hands, wearing gloves, and putting hands in pockets.

**How does the disease develop?** The disease most often begins in the palm of the hand at the base of the ring or little fingers.

- A lump or pit may show up months or even years before a cord develops from the palm to the fingers.
- Drawing of the fingers into the hand can occur because of contracture of the fascia near the joints in the fingers.
- The skin may be involved with the disease, but the tendons in the hand are not affected.
- Having the disease in both hands is common.