

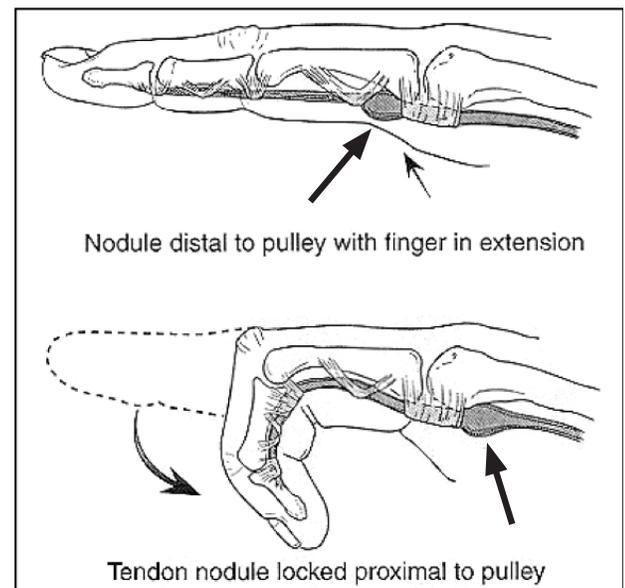
## Definition

An inflammatory process surrounding the flexor tendons of the thumb or fingers that causes tightness in the tunnels that these tendons pass through. It is formally called stenosing tenosynovitis (STS).

## Clinical Symptoms

The hallmark of a trigger finger is a “catching” or “locking” of the finger noted in the palm opposite of the knuckles. Often people wake up in the morning with their finger bent in, or locked, and painfully have to pull it out. As the day progresses the “catching” and pain may subside a bit. A painful nodule or bump can be felt in the palm at the base of the finger.

Not all patients have “catching” or “locking.” Many patients note an ache or soreness in the palm that is aggravated by bending the fingers. Others feel stiffness or pain in the middle joint of their finger. In general, this makes the hand feel weak.



## Who gets Trigger Fingers?

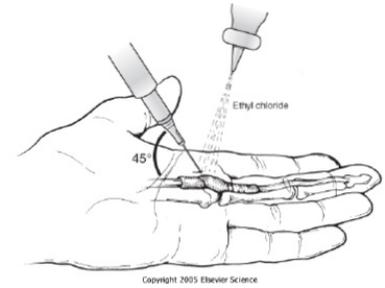
Most patients are older than 40 years old. People with diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis are much more prone than others in getting this condition. It is also commonly seen in patients who undertake highly repetitive assembly activities or use vibratory tools.

## How do you know I have a Trigger Finger and not something else?

The symptoms that people relay are common and tests performed in the office easily confirm the problem. I will take a thorough history and then examine your wrist and fingers. Since this condition is one of pressure and tightness at the level of your finger tendons in the palm, I will focus on locating the specific region of tightness and tenderness.

## What is the treatment?

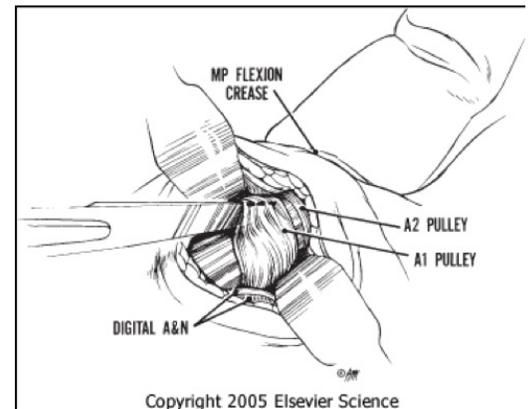
Unless the condition is severe or advanced, the treatment involves a local steroid injection over the tight tendon and pulley. In 70-80% of patients, complete resolution is encountered after a single injection. Occasionally, a second injection can improve the success. Third injections do not seem to add to success. Oral medications and/or splinting do not give reliable success in this condition.



If all else fails, and you are still having painful locking or catching, then surgical release can provide permanent relief in greater than 98% of people. What is released is a tight tunnel called the “A-1 pulley.” If a single finger is involved, a half-inch incision is used in the palm requiring one or two stitches.

## What is the recovery from surgery like?

After the operation, a bulky bandage is used for several days. You are allowed to use your fingers the very first day. After the stitches are removed you are allowed to perform light activities. With-in two to three weeks, most people are using their hand normally.



People who have had this condition for a long time will notice an ache in the middle joint of the involved finger. This occurs because this joint, which previously was held in check from the tightness, can now move freely and the stiffness has to be worked out over weeks. Some people who note this bend before surgery have it permanently.

## Will I need therapy afterward?

Many people find that a short course of Hand Therapy is beneficial. This will be tailored to your specific needs.

## Other sources of information on this topic

American Society for Surgery of the Hand

[www.hand-surg.org](http://www.hand-surg.org)

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

[www.aaos.org](http://www.aaos.org)