

“Working with a knowledgeable hand therapist can make the difference between success and failure in complex hand surgical cases. The therapist extends the continuum of our care, as well as functioning as coach and trainer for our patients.”

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What is pediatric trigger thumb?

Trigger thumb occurs when the tendon that bends the tip of the thumb gets stuck as it passes through a small tunnel. When the thumb gets stuck like this, it is called “triggering.” The tendon that is involved is called the flexor pollicis longus (FPL). The FPL gets stuck in the first annular (A1) pulley. The A1 pulley is like a seatbelt that holds the FPL in place.



What are the symptoms of pediatric trigger thumb?

When the thumb is stuck in a bent position, it can be uncomfortable, but does not usually cause excessive pain to the child. A small bump, or nodule, may be felt at the base of the thumb. The bent position of the thumb can make it more difficult to pick up and hold objects and can interfere with fine motor coordination. Trigger thumb can be seen when an infant is around 4-6 months of age as they start playing with their hands more, but may not be obvious until the child is older (1-2 years old). Pediatric trigger thumb can be present on just one hand or both.

What causes pediatric trigger thumb?

The cause of pediatric trigger thumb is unknown. It is not usually related to an injury.

What is the treatment for a trigger finger?

Treatment of pediatric trigger thumb will depend on the doctor’s recommendations and is based on how long or how often the thumb gets stuck in a bent position. The doctor may recommend therapy or a custom-made orthosis designed to stretch the thumb. A hand therapist may also show the parents how to stretch the child’s thumb. Surgery may be recommended if the thumb is unable to be straightened with an orthosis. After surgery, the hand therapist may make an orthosis to help hold the thumb in a straighter position and work with the child to encourage use of the hand during play.

