



Ganglion Cysts



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What are ganglion cysts?

Ganglion cysts are very common lumps that appear in the hand and wrist. The most common location is on the back of the wrist, but they also occur on the palm side of the wrist, the distal joint of the finger, and at the base of the finger.

Ganglion cysts are usually attached to a nearby joint or tendon sheath. They are often noticed after an injury, and may be painful. Ganglion cysts often change in size, and may even spontaneously disappear. Ganglion cysts are not cancerous.

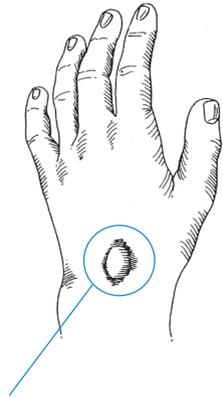


Diagram 1

Dorsal wrist ganglion—most common location

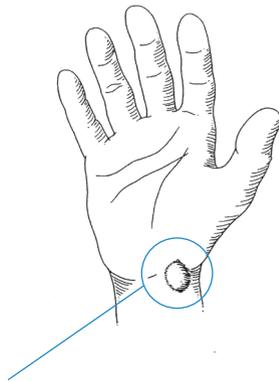


Diagram 2

Volar wrist ganglion

What causes them?

The cause of ganglion cysts is unknown. It appears that they occur when the joint capsule or tendon sheath bulges out of place, and fills with fluid normally found in joints or around tendons.

How are they diagnosed?

Usually ganglion cysts are easily diagnosed by the appearance and location of the cyst. Your hand surgeon may wish to obtain X-rays to look for associated joint abnormalities.

How are they treated?

Most ganglion cysts require nothing more than reassuring the patient that it is only a simple cyst. Treatment may be warranted if the cyst is painful, limits activity, or if its appearance is unacceptable to the patient. Fluid can be removed from the cyst, and some will disappear completely with simple aspiration. If non-surgical therapy is unsuccessful, surgery may be an option to remove the cyst. The surgery is usually performed on an outpatient basis using local, regional, or general anesthesia. The goal of surgery is to remove the cyst and its origin. This often requires the removal of the associated joint capsule or tendon sheath. A splint may be placed for a short time after surgery. Some swelling and pain is to be expected after surgery, but regular activity can be resumed as soon as it is comfortable. Surgery is the best way to remove ganglion cysts, but it provides no guarantee that a cyst will not return.



Diagram 3

Mucous cyst of finger

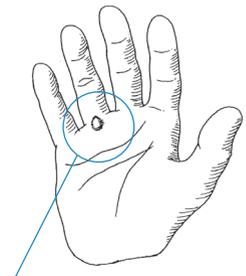


Diagram 4

Volar retinacular cyst