

Ganglion Cysts

Ganglion Cysts are very common swellings (lumps) that sometimes grow in the hand and wrist. Ganglions are fluid-filled sacs.

Ganglions in the hand occur in 4 characteristic sites:

1. Dorsal wrist - back of the wrist
2. Volar wrist - palm/ thumb side of the wrist
3. Muroid cyst - the end joint of the finger associated with arthritis & may cause finger nail deformity or ridging
4. Flexor sheath ganglion- base of a finger arising from the sheath around the tendons.

Ganglion cysts usually arise from adjacent joint linings or tendon sheaths. Although there is usually no specific cause for ganglions, there may have been an injury before the appearance of the ganglion. These ganglion cysts can be painful, especially when they first appear and with constant or strenuous use of the hand. Ganglions may fluctuate in size and may disappear spontaneously.

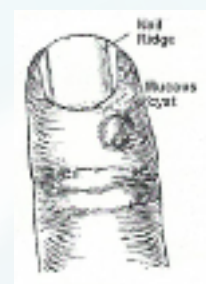
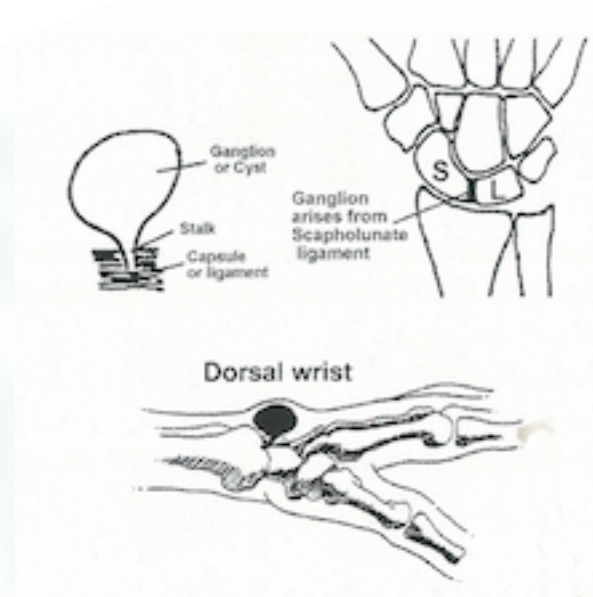
Diagnosis

The diagnosis of a ganglion is usually based on where the cyst is and what it looks like.

An X-ray may be recommended to rule out problems with nearby joints or extension of the ganglion into the bone.

An ultrasound may confirm the diagnosis when a ganglion is very small.

Often no tests are required.



Treatment

1. Observation - some ganglions resolve spontaneously
2. Wrist brace
3. Injection with cortisone and bursting or draining the ganglion. Not very effective for wrist ganglions but is of use for flexor sheath ganglions
4. Surgery
 - Indicated if the cyst is painful, limits activity, or its appearance is unacceptable & other treatments have failed
 - Aim to remove not only the cyst but also the stalk and small flap of the capsule or ligament from which the ganglion is arising
 - Is generally performed in hospital as a day only procedure

Surgery for Wrist Ganglions

- after the operation the wrist is in a splint for a few days & then the wrist can be exercised and scar massage after the operation may be required
- often bending the wrist forward is limited for a few months following the surgery but usually returns over time
- approximately 10% chance of ganglion recurrence following resection

Mucoid cysts

- the DIP or end joint of a finger is commonly affected by osteoarthritis. The ganglion or cyst forms secondary to the arthritis
- may cause finger nail deformity or ridging due to pressure on the nail bed
- excision of mucoid cysts requires not only excision of the cyst & stalk but also the entire back capsule of the DIP joint and any loose pieces of bone or spurs on the back of the joint
- recurrence rate also approximately 10%

Post-operative therapy includes wound care, desensitization, scar massage and gentle exercises

