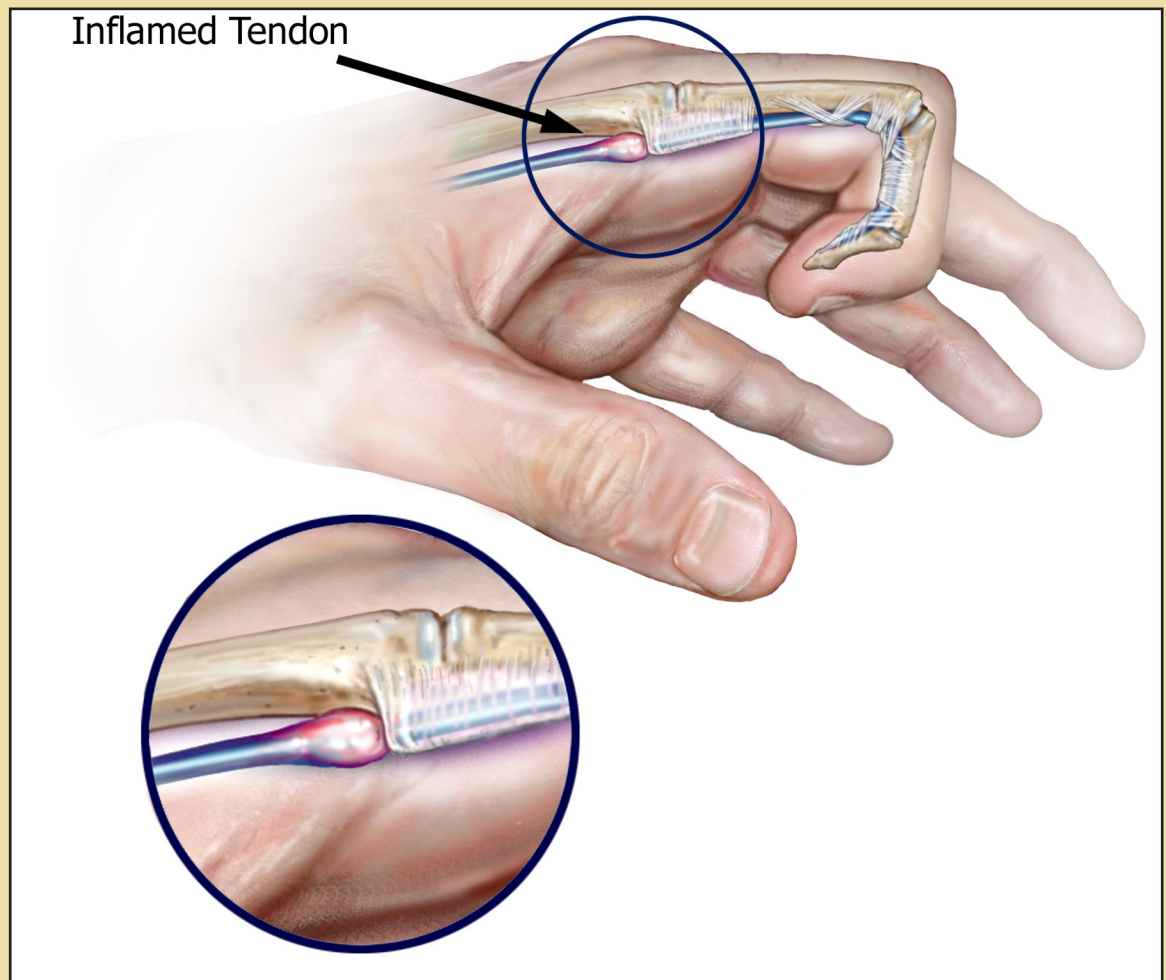


Understanding Trigger Finger

Anatomy

Movement of the fingers is achieved by a complex system of tendons and pulleys. The tendons connect the muscles of the forearm to the fingers, while the pulleys act to keep the tendons properly aligned. Much in the same way that the rings of a fishing pole keep the fishing line against the pole, the pulleys keep the tendon in the proper place. This arrangement allows for the muscles and tendons to achieve a great deal of strength and control when flexing the fingers.

A trigger finger develops when either the pulleys become thick and tight or when the tendon becomes inflamed and enlarged. This larger tendon has a difficult time passing through the narrow pulley and may catch as it passes through. Trigger finger can be caused by gout, trauma, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis. However, in many cases a specific cause cannot be identified.



CLINIC LOCATIONS

Columbia Heights
Eagan
Forest Lake
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Hastings
Maplewood
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CONTACT INFORMATION

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Symptoms

Patients with trigger fingers may notice a discomfort and tenderness at the base of the fingers or thumb. Over time the finger may begin to catch or trigger when it is flexed and a nodule may develop at the base of the affected finger. This may worsen and eventually become painful.

Diagnosis

A thorough physical exam and x-rays are crucial to diagnosing trigger finger. X-ray can show your physician the bony anatomy of the hand and in combination with your symptoms help determine the extent of your injury.

Treatment

Treatment for trigger finger is based upon the severity of your symptoms. In the early stages treatment is focused on reducing the inflammation within the tendon. A cortisone injection, wearing a splint and/or taking anti-inflammatory medications can all help in this regard. Additionally, if certain activities cause a flare up of your symptoms, your doctor may recommend that you avoid these activities for a certain period of time until the inflammation subsides.

If your trigger finger is severe, your hand surgeon may recommend surgery to release the pulley. By releasing the pulley, the tendon is allowed to move freely without catching or locking. This surgery is done as an outpatient procedure and you will need to plan on limiting the use of your hand for several weeks after surgery. Your doctor may prescribe hand therapy to you after your first post-operative appointment. These visits will focus on increasing your range of motion and strength, while decreasing your pain and inflammation. Your doctor's patient coordinator will help schedule the surgery and answer any questions you may have.

In conjunction with your surgeon, you will decide on the most appropriate course of treatment.

NOTES:
