

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Wrist Ganglions (Cysts)

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

When you notice a curious lump on your hand or wrist - don't panic. Most likely it is a cyst or fluid filled sac that has been there for awhile, but it has gotten large enough to be noticed.

I am constantly asked what causes these nuisances. I wish I knew. No one else knows either. They arise from connective tissues in the wrist and fingers for some unknown reason.

Interesting Facts

- They are sacs filled with a jelly like fluid
- People between ages of 15 - 40 are most affected
- I have also seen them in children 2 years old
- Rarely they disappear on their own
- More women than men have them
- Gymnasts are especially vulnerable
- When removed, 95% of the time they don't come back
- Ganglions are not tumors
- Ganglions can appear on the top of the wrist, palm side of the wrist and the fingers
- They rarely appear on the ankle or foot

Symptoms

These cysts can be painful even if they are small. The cyst can put pressure on nerves and irritate tendons. They can especially hurt if you grasp a hard object. They are unpredictable. Cysts can grow larger and not hurt at all. However, they are unsightly and my patients don't like that.

They can seem to disappear only to return later.

Moving the wrist a lot can cause the cyst to enlarge.

How I Treat It

If the ganglion interferes with daily activities or causes discomfort give me a call. It should at least be looked at.

Treatment Menu:

- Wear a wrist brace and rest the wrist to see if it will shrink
- Draw out the fluid with a needle

- The center shell of the cyst remains and often fluid reappears
- Outpatient surgery is the most frequent treatment

After Surgery

The hand and wrist bandage stays on for 7 - 10 days. Sutures are removed in the office. I then give you your hand back, but it isn't very comfortable yet. In a few weeks it usually is, but in the meantime you will need to be careful.

You optimists will rejoice that 95% of the time it's gone. Pessimists will frown and worry that there is a 5% chance it will return. Which are you?

Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive

For much more musculoskeletal and Orthopaedic Surgery information check out the office website www.orthopodsurgeon.com which also takes you to Your Orthopaedic Connection. It contains a huge amount of useful information.

In addition, the website has the Archive of every article I have written for you in Shepherd Argus. All the articles are listed from most recent back to the first one! Check it out for interesting articles you may have missed.

I appreciate you loyal readers and welcome all newcomers!

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush