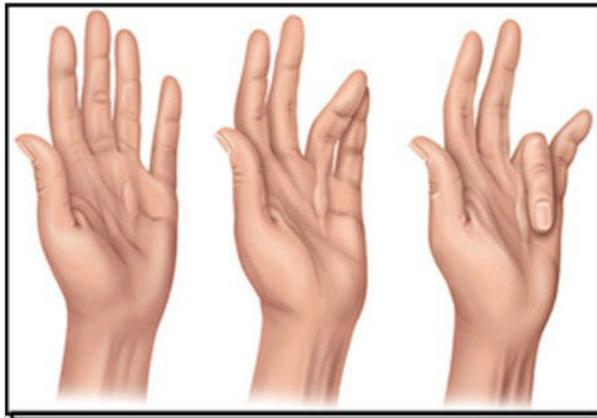




## South Eastern Hand Therapy

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### Trigger Finger



#### TRIGGER FINGER

Trigger finger occurs when tendonitis develops in the tendons that bend the fingers

#### WHAT CAUSES IT?

Tendon swelling (tendonitis) can be caused by repetitive or strenuous activities or in association with a medical condition.

Everybody has different levels of susceptibility to tendonitis thus some people may never develop problems doing a particular task that causes you much discomfort.

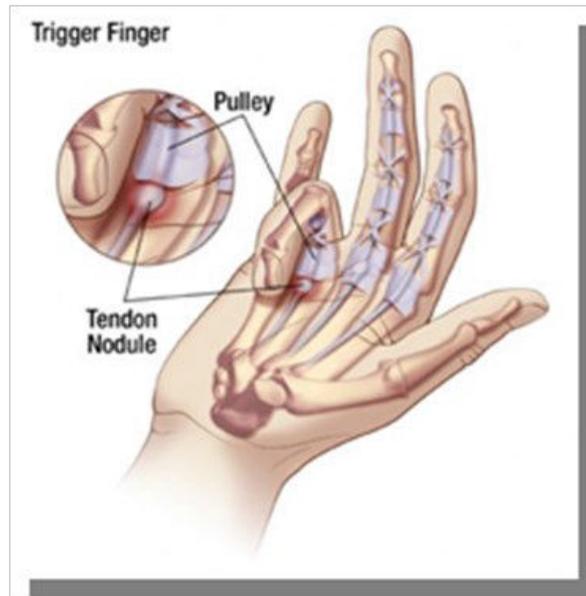
When the tendons that bend the fingers, become inflamed, they can cause pain, swelling, and stiffness.

Tendon swelling interferes with the normal gliding movement of the tendons and can cause the finger to click, catch ("triggering") or lock in position.

#### ANATOMY

The tendons of the hand glide through a protective covering called the tendon sheath. The sheath is like a tunnel made up of dense fibrous tissue called pulleys. These structures are attached to the bones of the fingers and thumb, and hold the tendons close to the bones over which they pass.

When irritation and swelling occurs in the tendon it is no longer able to glide freely and may swell up in a balloon-like mass at the point where it tries to pass into the tunnel.



Upon forceful bending of the finger or thumb, the enlarged portion of the tendon is dragged through the constricted opening. This motion is often accompanied by a painful snap, and the finger or thumb may be locked in a bent position. Straightening the finger or thumb may require using the other hand to pull the finger back into an extended position, causing another painful snap as the swollen part of the tendon passes back through the sheath.

### CONSERVATIVE TREATMENT

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication (NSAID), such as aspirin, ibuprofen, can assist in reducing inflammation thus “triggering”.
- Avoiding activities that may be causing the tendon irritation.
- Avoid prolonged gripping or repetitive tasks and anything that causes the finger to “trigger”.
- If fingers bend and lock during the night and are painful to straighten in the morning, it may be helpful to wear a splint to keep them straight while sleeping.
- Hand therapy including ultrasound, control of swelling, heat or cold treatments may also be beneficial

### TREATMENT

Steroid injection may be administered directly into the tendon sheath to reduce the soft tissue swelling. The steroid takes several weeks to have its full effect. In cases that do not respond to conservative treatment, or if the finger or thumb remain in a locked position, surgery may be recommended.

### SURGERY

Surgery is performed on a day surgery basis under local anaesthetic and sedation. A horizontal incision is made in the palm at the base of the affected finger or thumb. The surgeon will release the pulley involved in your “triggering” removing the obstruction on the gliding tendon.

The hand has many pulley's, thus release of one is unlikely to result in a change in the functioning of the hand / finger.

**If you have any questions or problems, please phone your therapist on 8560 0293**

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