

Dupuytren's Disease Surgery: What You Need to Know

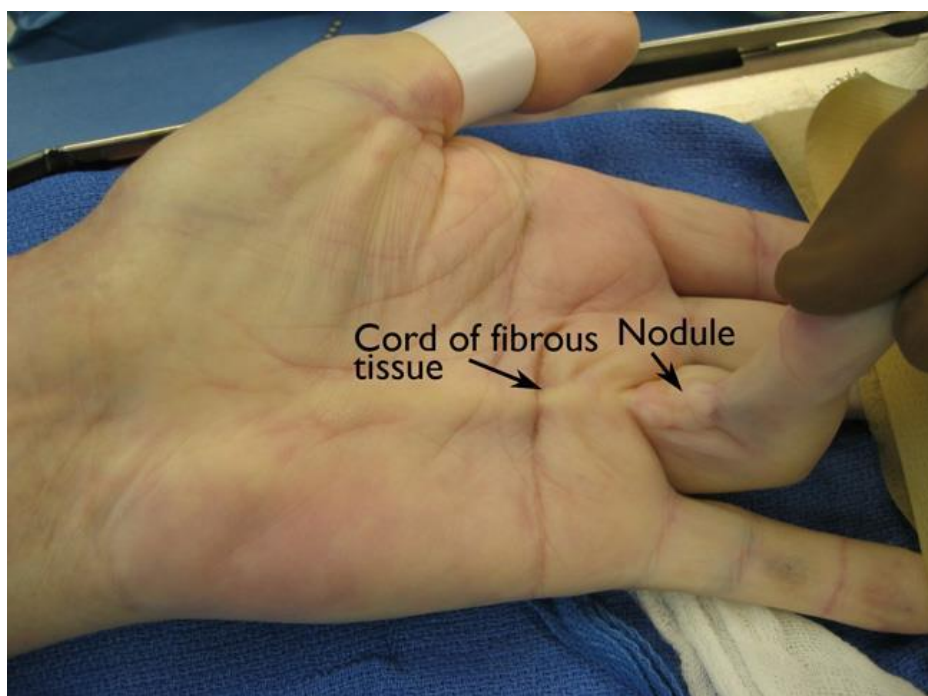
Dupuytren's disease is a condition where the tissue (fascia) beneath the skin of the palm thickens and tightens, forming cords that pull one or more fingers into a bent position. This can make it hard to straighten the fingers, affecting daily tasks like grasping or shaking hands. When the condition progresses and non-surgical options (like needle aponeurotomy or injections) aren't enough, surgery may be recommended. The procedure we perform, called a **limited fasciectomy and contracture release**, removes the diseased tissue to restore finger movement. Below, we explain the surgery, recovery, potential complications, and expected outcomes to help you feel informed.

Description of the Surgery

A limited fasciectomy and contracture release targets the thickened cords causing the finger contracture, while preserving as much healthy tissue as possible:

- The surgeon numbs the hand with local or regional anesthesia (numbing the hand or arm) and sedation is administered, though general anesthesia may be used depending on your case.
- Zigzag or horizontal incisions (length and number depending on the extent of the disease) are made in the palm and sometimes along the affected finger(s).
- The surgeon carefully identifies and removes the thickened, diseased fascia (cords) that are pulling the finger(s) into a bent position. This releases the contracture, allowing the finger(s) to straighten.
- The incision is closed with stitches, and a padded dressing or splint is applied to protect the hand and keep the fingers in an extended position.
- The procedure usually takes less than an hour, although more severe cases can take 1-2 hours, and is performed as an outpatient surgery, meaning you can go home the same day.

This approach focuses on the specific areas of contracture, minimizing disruption to unaffected parts of the hand.



What to Expect During Recovery

Recovery from a limited fasciectomy requires patience as the hand heals and adjusts. Here's what to expect:

- **Immediately After Surgery:**

Your hand will be bandaged, often with a splint to keep the fingers extended. Mild pain, swelling, or stiffness is normal, manageable with prescribed pain medication or over-the-counter options like ibuprofen. Keep your hand elevated to reduce swelling.

- **First 1-2 Weeks:**

You will typically be referred to a hand therapist, with your first appointment scheduled within a few days after surgery. Your therapist will remove your bandages and work with you on motion exercises as a part of your rehabilitation program. He or she may also create a removable extension splint to help prevent recurrence of the contracture. Sutures are typically removed within 10-14 days. Sometimes, small wounds will be left open to heal "from inside out" over a few weeks. You'll need to avoid gripping or heavy use of the hand until the wounds are healed and the swelling has subsided.

- **Weeks 3-6:**

You will continue hand therapy with a progression of motion exercises and strengthening to improve flexibility and function. Light activities like writing or buttoning a shirt may resume with care, though nighttime splinting might continue for up to 3 months.

- **Months 2-3:**

Most patients regain significant finger motion and can return to normal daily tasks. Therapy helps maximize straightening and function, though full grip strength may take longer to recover.

- **Full Recovery:**

Complete healing, including scar softening and strength restoration, can take 3-6 months.

Follow your surgeon's instructions on splinting, therapy, and activity restrictions for the best outcome.

Potential Complications

Limited fasciectomy is a safe and effective procedure, but risks exist, as with any surgery. These are uncommon and often manageable:

- **Infection:** Redness, swelling, or drainage at the incision site may indicate an infection, treatable with antibiotics.
- **Wound Healing Issues:** Slow or delayed healing may occur, particularly with severe contractures or with patients with underlying nutritional or health problems. In most cases these wounds will eventually heal on their own with proper wound care.
- **Nerve or Blood Vessel Injury:** Rarely, nearby nerves or vessels may be irritated or injured, causing temporary numbness, tingling, or poor circulation in the finger(s). Permanent injury is uncommon but may present as a risk in very severe cases or in hands that have undergone previous surgeries for Dupuytren's disease.
- **Scar Sensitivity:** The incision site may feel tender or tight for weeks to months, usually improving with time and massage.

- **Stiffness:** Some patients experience lingering stiffness, which therapy can often address.
- **Recurrence:** Dupuytren's disease can return in the same or different areas of the hand over time, though surgery typically provides excellent long-term relief when compared to minimally invasive procedures.

Contact your doctor if you notice severe pain, signs of infection, or unexpected changes after surgery.

Expected Outcomes

Limited fasciectomy and contracture release has a high success rate for improving hand function and reducing deformity:

- **Finger Straightening:** Most patients achieve significant or full correction of the contracture, allowing better finger extension immediately or within weeks.
- **Improved Function:** You'll regain the ability to perform tasks like grasping, holding objects, or opening your hand fully, though grip strength may take months to fully return.
- **Long-Term Results:** Approximately 80-90% of patients experience lasting improvement and satisfaction. While the disease may return in the hand even after surgery, this usually does not occur for several years or decades.

Outcomes depend on the severity of the contracture, how long it was present, and your commitment to therapy and splinting.

Final Notes

Dupuytren's disease surgery can free your fingers and restore hand function. If you have questions about the procedure or your recovery, feel free to discuss them with your surgeon. We're here to support you every step of the way!