

Trigger Finger Explained

Trigger finger is a condition that affects the tendons in your fingers or thumb, making them difficult to move or causing them to lock in a bent position. It develops when repeated gripping, squeezing or pinching motions irritate the tendon and cause swelling in the surrounding tissue. Over time, that inflammation makes it harder for the tendon to glide smoothly through its sheath. Workers who regularly use their hands for repetitive tasks are at risk.

Common Signs and Symptoms

Trigger finger often develops gradually. Early warning signs are easy to overlook, but catching them early gives you the best chance of avoiding a more serious problem. Watch for:

- A snapping, popping, or catching sensation when you bend or straighten a finger or thumb
- Pain or stiffness when gripping, squeezing or closing your hand
- Soreness at the base of the finger or in the palm
- A tender lump or bump in the palm near the base of the affected finger
- A finger or thumb that locks in a bent position and requires your other hand to straighten it

Symptoms are often worse in the morning and may ease somewhat as you use your hand throughout the day. Do not ignore these signs. Left untreated, trigger finger can worsen and limit your ability to perform everyday tasks.

Ways to Prevent Trigger Finger

You may not be able to eliminate hand-intensive tasks, but you can change how you do them.

- **Take micro-breaks.** Give your hands a rest during longer tasks. Pause, open your hand fully, and let your fingers relax for a few seconds before continuing.
- **Vary your grip.** Avoid holding tools or objects in the same tight grip for extended periods. Switch hands when possible, and set items down between tasks rather than holding them continuously.
- **Use tools that fit your hand.** Oversized or undersized handles require more gripping force. Where possible, choose ergonomically designed tools with padded, appropriately sized grips to reduce strain.
- **Reduce grip force.** Use only as much grip as the task requires. Gripping harder than necessary is one of the most common contributors to hand and tendon injuries.
- **Stretch your hands and fingers.** During breaks, gently extend and spread your fingers, then make a relaxed fist. This helps maintain flexibility and reduce tension in the tendons.
- **Report discomfort early.** Symptoms that start as mild can progress quickly with continued strain. Telling your supervisor about pain or stiffness or catching sensations early allows for task modifications before the condition worsens.

Key Takeaways

Trigger finger is preventable and treatable, but early action matters. If you notice any of the warning signs, report them to your supervisor and seek a medical evaluation. Treatment options range from rest and splinting to corticosteroid injections, and in some cases, a minor procedure. The sooner you address symptoms, the better your chances of a full recovery.