

Finger Mucous Cyst

Mucous cysts are small, fluid-filled sacs that form in the fingers. They are associated with **osteoarthritis (OA)** and usually develop in patients 50-70 years old. These cysts appear between the last joint of the finger and the bottom of the fingernail. Unless a mucous cyst is painful or in danger of rupturing, it can be left alone without causing harm to the patient. Even surgically removing a mucous cyst may not relieve pain if the underlying cause of the pain is OA.

Nonsurgical Treatment

Observation is often sufficient treatment for mucous cysts. Mucous cysts are not typically harmful and usually do not grow worse without treatment.

However, sometimes a mucous cyst will rupture. When this occurs, it creates a path directly into the joint where bacteria could enter and cause a serious infection inside the joint. When this happens, antibiotics are applied directly to the site and the finger is wrapped in a dressing. Oral antibiotics are also prescribed. If the joint develops an infection despite these steps, surgery is required. During surgery, the affected area is carefully cleaned, and a dressing is applied.

Surgical Treatment

Surgery is recommended if you feel significant pain or if the cyst and skin appear ready to rupture. Needle puncture is one option. In this procedure, the cyst is punctured and **aspirated**. (**Aspiration** means drawing the fluid out with suction.) However, this procedure has less than a 50% success rate.

Another option involves **excision** (removal) of the cyst and its connection to the finger joint. Patients should be aware that removing a mucous cyst may not eliminate pain if the pain is from underlying OA. In this procedure, the cyst, stalk, and any bone spurs on the joint are removed. If the skin on the finger is too closely attached to the cyst, a bit of the skin may need to be removed from the finger. If that's the case, a small skin graft is added to the spot. Surgery can usually be performed from the finger. If that's the case, a small skin graft is added to the spot. Surgery can usually be performed using **regional anesthesia**, meaning only the arm or finger is numbed.

Complications may occur with both procedures. A slight risk of infection exists with both. Even after an excision surgery, a mucous cyst may reappear, though this is rare.