

Advice for Parents and Carers

Ganglion Cysts in Children

What is a ganglion cyst?

Ganglions are the most common swelling around the wrist. They occur commonly in children and usually disappear on their own. They contain a jelly like fluid, called synovial fluid, which is fluid that the body makes to lubricate joints and tunnels in which tendons pass through. They may arise from any joint or tendon tunnel but there are 4 very common areas around the wrist:

- Back of the wrist
- Front of the wrist
- Base of the thumb
- Base of the finger

What is the cause?

Ganglions occur when this synovial fluid escapes from a joint or tendon tunnel. We usually do not why this happens.

What are the symptoms?

A swelling or lump becomes apparent. This may change in size and it may or may not be painful.

How is it diagnosed?

Usually it is a diagnosis made after an examination. They are usually characteristic and in certain locations. Occasionally we may drain some of the fluid to confirm the diagnosis or in certain circumstances your child may have an ultrasound.

What is the Treatment?

In the vast majority of ganglions in children and adolescents, these resolve over time by themselves. It is therefore safe to leave them alone.

If the cyst is large then we may recommend draining the fluid. We use a needle and give your child local anaesthetic which numbs the area. This takes place in the clinic.

A dorsal wrist ganglion, a ganglion on the back of the wrist, is probably the most common in older children and young adults. It often resolves over time and is harmless. If it is large and painful, it is best treated with aspiration where we drain the fluid as required. We rarely remove the ganglion as it can lead to persistent pain and tenderness. The risk of surgery is generally thought to outweigh any benefit.