

Ganglion Cyst/Mucous Cyst

Any joint can give rise to a ganglion cyst. A joint is surrounded by a capsule and within the joint and its surrounding capsule is a thick



Typical dorsal ganglion cyst

synovial fluid. If there is an opening in the capsule the fluid leaks out through a "stalk" into the ganglion cyst.

The opening or tear in the capsule may be congenital or may be the result of injury (for example, an old "sprain") or arthritic bone spurs



Typical volar ganglion cyst

may create the opening. The end joint of the finger (distal interphalangeal/DIP) may become arthritic forming bone spurs which give rise to a "MUCOUS CYST," the name given to a ganglion cyst at this joint. Puncturing the cyst with



Atypical cyst from scaphotrapezial joint



Mucous cyst

a needle can result in an infected joint that requires fusion losing all motion at this joint. Puncturing the cyst should therefore be avoided. Attempting to pull the fluid out of a ganglion or mucus cyst is futile. The fluid is too thick, jelly-like. What little fluid is removed is rapidly replaced by more fluid flowing from the joint into the cyst. Steroid injection is not advised.

These measures may cause scar tissue complicating future removal. Ganglion cysts may be painful. They may grow very large and scar onto arteries or nerves and we therefore recommend early excision.

Outpatient surgical excision is straightforward but like all hand surgical procedures must be performed meticulously by an experienced hand surgeon. In addition to removing the cyst we repair the joint capsule in order to reduce the chance of recurrence which should be less than five percent. Others recommend not repairing the capsule leaving it open but in our experience this results in a significantly higher recurrence rate. Ganglion cyst excision requires joint capsulorrhaphy (repair) that may be quite extensive in addition to removal of the cyst.

Therefore ganglion excision is also an open joint procedure and requires the experience and skill of a trained hand surgeon.