

Macroductyly



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What is macrodactyly?

Macrodactyly is an overgrowth condition of the finger(s) so that it is either very enlarged at birth, or gets rapidly larger than the other fingers during the early years, even larger than an adult finger should be. It is usually only on one hand, but often affects more than one finger. Macrodactyly occurs in less than 1% of the population.

Why has my child got macrodactyly?

This condition does not run in families, but occurs sporadically.

What causes it?

The increase in size of the finger(s) appears to be caused in some way by one of the nerves supplying it. The exact mechanism is unknown. All of the structures within the finger(s) may be enlarged, including bone but especially the fatty tissue.

Is there anything else wrong with my child?

There are several very rare syndromes that include macrodactyly as one of their features. If your child suffers from one of these, you may already be under the care of other specialists.

Does it hurt?

No, this is not a painful condition. However, the abnormal finger may develop early arthritis (from about age 20).

Will my child be able to use their hand normally?

Children are very good at adapting to what is normal for them. However, as the finger(s) gets progressively larger it will be difficult to use, or get in the way. There is often stiffness of the finger and it may not be as sensitive as the other fingers.

How is it treated?

Macrodactyly is usually treated with surgery at the time when the size of the finger is approaching that of an adult. We often use the size of the same-sex parent's hand as a guide to tell us when the time is right for surgery.

Surgery may involve a variety of techniques designed to prevent further growth and/or to remove excess tissue. Growth can be very persistent despite surgery and more than one operation may be needed.

Surgery is performed as a day case under a light general anaesthetic. Rarely, the affected finger is so large or the growth so unrestricted that amputation may be necessary. A thumb that requires amputation may be replaced with a toe transfer. This is a longer operation that requires a hospital stay of several nights.

Why might surgery be delayed after birth?

Ideally, more complex surgery is performed when your child is bigger, making both the technical aspects of operating and anaesthetising your child easier and safer. In the case of macrodactyly, the timing of surgery is determined by the size of your child's finger. It is rarely necessary before the age of two or three, since after surgery further growth of the finger is unpredictable.

Why do we need follow up?

Follow-up is important to accurately chart the size of your child's finger in order to decide when surgery is needed. It is also useful to get help and advice from the hand therapy team, or for us to answer any of your questions.

How should I explain this condition to family and friends?

You can give them a copy of this leaflet and tell them that macrodactyly is a rare congenital hand condition that often requires surgery in childhood. Here in Cornwall we have a team of three specialist hand surgeons who have had training to treat this condition.

Any questions?

Please contact one of the hand surgeons via the secretary on 01872 253438.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

