

Dupuytren's Disease

WHAT IS DUPUYTREN'S DISEASE?

Dupuytren's disease was first described in 1831 by Baron Guillaumne Dupuytren, a celebrated French surgeon. Dupuytren's contracture is a condition commonly found in all northern European countries, Scandinavia and Russia. There is a strong familial tendency to develop Dupuytren's disease, and some propose that the condition is a result of a single dominant gene. The exact cause is unknown.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

The most common evidence of the disease is a "lump" or nodule in the palm near the flexion crease, most often at the base of the ring or small finger. This lump or nodule may also occur at the base of the thumb. Although the appearance of these nodules in the finger usually occurs within the course of the disease, these nodules may be evident as the very first symptom.

Another sign or symptom of Dupuytren's contracture is known as a dermal or skin pit. The pit may be single or multiple, and appears as a small, local, deep indentation of the skin. This may be the first finding, it may come later, or it may never appear at all. The pit usually is located in the palm but also can be in the fingers. This indentation occurs due to a contraction of the connective tissue fibers from the palmar fascia to the skin. The skin is drawn down to form the pit.

The cord is a longitudinal fibrous band, which extends from the palm into the finger(s). It most often appears with a nodule, but it can be separate. It may appear as a single or multiple band. The cord or band creates a flexion contracture at the finger joints as it crosses the joints. In other words, the cord pulls the finger into a bent position. Once the contracture has started, the process may proceed (either slowly or rapidly) to a severe deformity of one or several fingers. Even if only one or two fingers are involved, this condition may become so advanced that daily activities are embarrassingly awkward.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

The aim of surgery in Dupuytren's contracture is to regain maximum function. If there is no deformity or loss of hand function, treatment may be delayed until a significant deformity has developed.

Xiaflex is an injectable enzyme that degrades the Dupuytren's fibers and improves finger motion. Alternatively, surgery can be performed in order to remove the tissue and regain function.