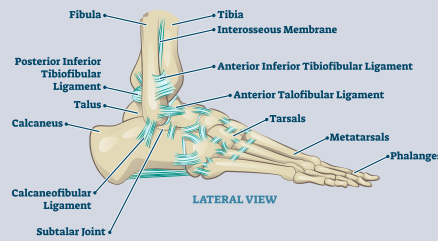


Foot and Ankle Conditions and Treatments



GANGLION CYSTS

What are ganglion cysts?

A ganglion cyst is a fluid-filled lump or mass that develops from the tissues in a joint. This cyst typically forms on or near a joint or tendon in the palm of the hand or on the back of the wrist, but they can occur at the base of a fingernail or on the base of finger on the palm side of the hand. Sometimes a ganglion cyst can form on the outside of the ankle or on the top of the foot. It may be made of multiple small cysts or one large cyst.

Ganglion cysts are common and generally harmless. They can appear suddenly, change size, or disappear. Ganglion cysts are more common in women between age 20 and 40.

What are the symptoms?

A ganglion cyst is a visible round or oval lump that may be soft or firm. When it forms on the foot or ankle, it's often firm, small and tender. A third of the time, a ganglion cyst produces no symptoms. However, most ganglion cysts cause some pain that's made worse with motion or repetitive trauma. If the cyst puts pressure on a nerve, it can cause pain, tingling, numbness and muscle weakness.

What are the causes?

The cause is unknown. A ganglion cyst can form when a joint or tendon is irritated from arthritis, overuse, trauma or injury that causes fluid to accumulate in and around the joint.

How is a ganglion cyst diagnosed?

Diagnosis is often based on the location of the cyst and its appearance. Your physician will conduct a physical exam and ask about your symptoms, medical history and when the lump appeared. They may remove a sample of the fluid from the cyst for testing. X-rays or an ultrasound may be ordered. The goal of these tests is to distinguish a solid tumor from a fluid filled cyst and to evaluate nearby joints for problems.

What are the treatments for a ganglion cyst?

Often the approach is "wait and see" if the cyst is painless, observing it over time to detect any changes. These cysts frequently disappear on their own. When the cyst interferes with function, causes pain or numbness and tingling in the hand and finger, your doctor will offer nonsurgical options, such as a splint and anti-inflammatory medicine, or aspiration of the fluid in the cyst to flatten it to reduce pain and improve mobility.

When these nonsurgical options fail to deliver relief or the cyst recurs, surgery to remove the cyst will be recommended. Surgery may be minimally invasive arthroscopic surgery or open surgery.