

Mr Sudip Jiban Ghosh MBBS, MS, FRCS(Plast)  
Consultant Plastic Surgeon  
Clinical Director Burns  
Stoke Mandeville Hospital  
[www.sjgplasticsurgery.com](http://www.sjgplasticsurgery.com)

## Dupuytren's Disease

### What is Dupuytren's disease?

A gradual thickening of fibrous (scar like) tissue beneath the skin of the palm and fingers (or occasionally the sole of the foot) which then contracts and prevents full straightening of the fingers. There may also be pits and nodules in the skin itself. We do not know for certain why some people develop this condition and not others. The condition is common and may affect up to one third of men to some degree. It is not a form of cancer. It is named after Baron Dupuytren, a Paris surgeon of the early 1800's who did much research on this condition.

### What will happen if it is not treated?

If left untreated Dupuytren's disease in many cases causes no problems. In others it tends to cause more and more bending of the fingers and may start to involve more fingers on the hand. In these cases the fingers get more awkward and useless as time goes on. If treatment is postponed beyond a certain point the chance of good recovery of function is less.

### What kind of treatment is available?

Treatment is by operation, but is not always immediately necessary, depending on how bad the disease is. Different operations are done according to how severe the deformity is. If the skin is badly involved it will be removed and replaced with normal skin from another part of your body (this is called a skin graft) usually the arm.

### What anaesthetic will I have?

There are two options. You can have a general anaesthetic (where you are put to sleep) or you can have a type of local anaesthetic where your arm is made "numb". Each person's case is decided individually taking his or her wishes into account. Though some people may be unsuitable for general anaesthetic.

### What happens after the surgery?

Immediately after surgery your hand is bandaged and raised in a special sling beside your bed for the first night after surgery. The following day you will be told what to do as regards physiotherapy. In the hand this varies with the operation that you have. Everybody has to do elbow and shoulder exercises to stop these getting stiff. Before you leave the ward you will be told when to return (or attend your local surgery) to have your stitches out and have your progress checked. There is a special instruction leaflet for patients who have had hand surgery, which you should receive when you are going home.

**How soon can I go back to work?**

This depends on what you do. If you do not use the operated hand at work you may wish to go back within a few days, usually with a sling. If however you do quite heavy work it may take up to three months to get back to work. You should not drive for several weeks after surgery until your hand is fully healed. An awkward or painful hand could cause you to have an accident.

**Will the disease come back after surgery?**

It sometimes happens that people have further problems with Dupuytren's disease. More often people develop the disease in their other hand or in the operated parts of the affected hand and may need further operations.