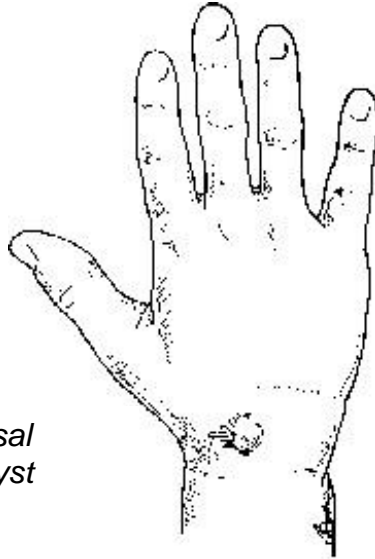


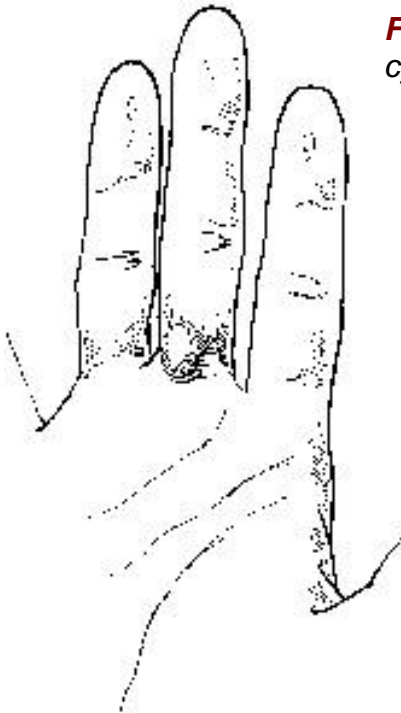
**GANGLION CYSTS** are fluid-filled masses that usually form on the hand or wrist (Fig. 1). Masses on the palm side of the fingers are called retinacular cysts (Fig. 2). When they appear on the top joint of the fingers near the nail, they are called mucous cysts (Fig. 3). Cysts are not cancerous and typically do not spread.



**Fig. 1** Dorsal ganglion cyst

**Causes.** Cysts occur when fluid in a joint pushes out of a joint or tendon (tissue that connects muscle to bone). They can also occur in the lining (sheath) of tendons. They can appear after an injury when the tendon sheath or joint tissue (capsule) is torn. Soft tissue begins to push through the tear and move out. When the tear heals, it can trap the soft tissue outside the joint. This soft tissue releases fluid that causes the cyst to expand.

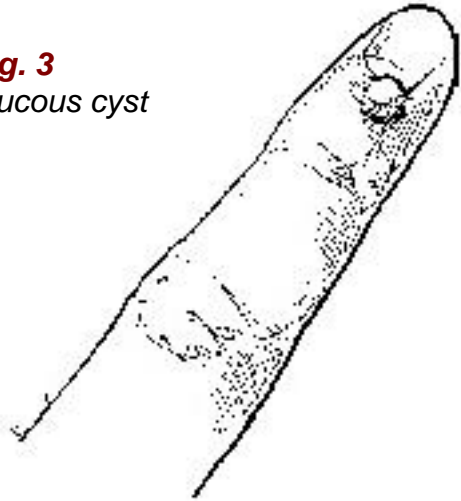
**Symptoms.** Ganglion cysts can cause pain when they first develop. As the cysts enlarge, a nodule or bump may develop under the skin. Ganglion cysts can change size. Sometimes they disappear because the fluid has drained out of the cyst and back into the joint or beneath the skin. However, the cyst may fill up with fluid again.



**Fig. 2** Retinacular cyst

**Treatment.** To find out if the nodule on your hand is a cyst, the doctor examines your hand and the place where the nodule formed. X-rays can determine if the joints in your hand are affected. Wearing a splint or taking an anti-inflammatory medication (such as aspirin) may help lessen the pain. If the cyst continues to cause pain or limit activities, the fluid in some cysts may be removed with a needle. Although removing the fluid can cause the cyst to get smaller or disappear, the cyst can return.

**Fig. 3**  
*Mucous cyst*

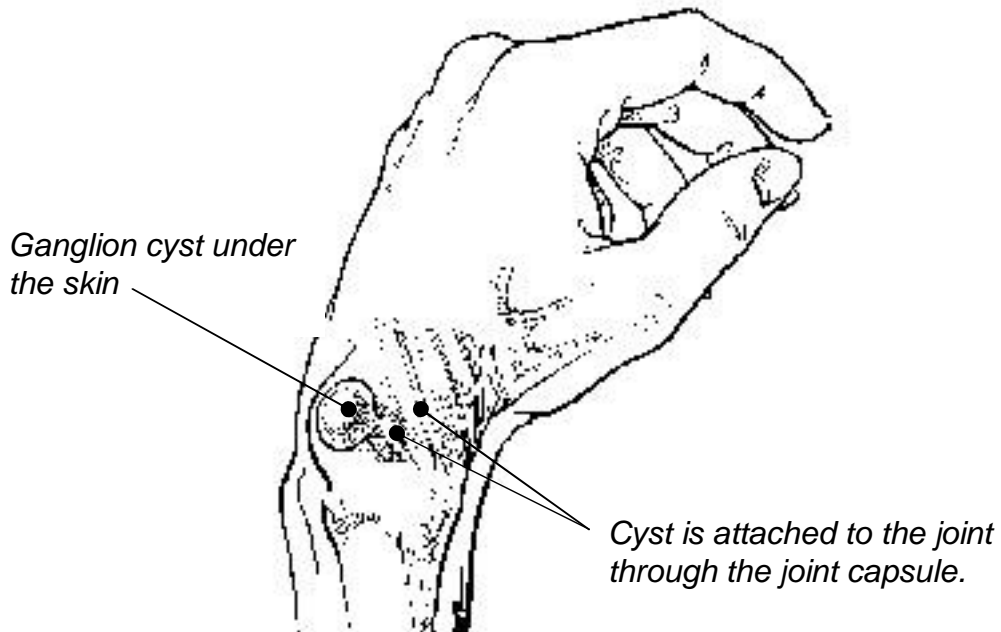


Surgery provides the best chance of permanently removing the cyst. However, the only reason to remove the cyst is if it is causing pain or limiting function. During surgery, your doctor removes the cyst and the tissue from which it grows (Fig. 4). The

operation often can be done on an outpatient basis, which means you do not have to spend the night in the hospital. After surgery, you may wear a splint on the wrist or finger for 7 to 10 days. The splint keeps the area still so it can heal. As you recover, the tenderness and swelling will decrease, and you can return to your regular activities when the area no longer hurts. Recovery time differs for each person.

Although cysts removed surgically usually do not come back, they can sometimes return.

**Fig. 4**  
*A tiny piece of joint capsule is taken out when the cyst is removed.*



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