

## **DUPUYTREN'S CONTRACTURE**

Dupuytren's Contracture is named after a French Surgeon who pioneered its treatment. It is a condition in which the skin of the hand thickens and produces scar tissue. It is often first noted as a painless lump or cord in the palm near one of the horizontal creases. The skin over the palm may feel thicker and as the disease progresses, may appear dimpled. Dupuytren's Contracture is usually slow to develop often over many years, but the abnormal cord of tissue may eventually begin to tighten causing one or more of the fingers to bend slightly toward the palm. The little and ring fingers are the most commonly affected. Both hands may be involved at the same time, although one is usually more involved than the other.

The cause for Dupuytren's Contracture is unknown. At times, there can be a family (genetic) predisposition. Men are much more commonly affected than women and most patients are over 50 years of age.

In most cases, Dupuytren's Contracture is asymptomatic and does not affect activities. If it continues to worsen, daily activities such as wearing gloves or doing fine hand work can be difficult. Since the thumb and first finger are rarely involved, there usually are minimal restrictions. Rarely, this condition can be severe leading to an inability to straighten the affected finger and open the hand. When the ring finger is permanently pulled forward, this is known as a trigger finger.

In most cases, Dupuytren's Contracture is a mild problem and does not cause symptoms or restrict any activities. In these situations, the best treatment is no treatment at all since the surgery is often difficult. If the problem produces symptoms or interferes with day to day activities, there are various surgical procedures which can be quite useful. If this is the situation please ask me for a referral to a hand surgeon.

Again, Dupuytren's Contracture is a chronic condition that leads to a thickness in scarring in the palms. While there is no true cure, most patients have minimal problems with this situation. If you have any other questions, please ask me before you leave the office.