

General Surgery & Surgical Oncology

Ganglion Cyst Removal (Ganglionectomy)

What is a ganglion cyst removal?

Ganglion cyst removal, called a ganglionectomy, is a procedure in which your health care provider removes a cyst from your hand, wrist, foot, or other part of your body. A ganglion cyst is a swollen, closed sac under the skin. The sac may develop from may develop from the sheath of a tendon or joint. The cyst contains fluid similar to joint fluid.

Alternatives to this procedure include:

- taking out the fluid with a needle or a syringe, with or without a cortisone injection
- choosing not to have treatment, recognizing the risks of your condition.

You should ask your provider about these choices.

How do I prepare for a ganglionectomy?

Plan for your care and recovery after the operation, especially if you are to have general anesthesia. Arrange for someone to drive you home afterwards. Allow for time to rest and try to find other people to help you with your day-to-day duties.

Follow your provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers heal more slowly after surgery. They are also more likely to have breathing problems during surgery. For this reason, if you are a smoker, you should quit at least 2 weeks before the procedure. It is best to quit 6 to 8 weeks before surgery. Also, your wounds will heal much better if you do not smoke after the surgery.

Follow the instructions your health care provider gives you. Do not eat or drink anything after midnight or the morning before the procedure. Do not even drink coffee, tea, or water after midnight.

What happens during the procedure?

You will be given a general, regional, or local anesthetic. Local and regional anesthetics numb part of the body while you remain awake. You may be given a sedative along with a local or regional anesthetic to relax you and reduce anxiety. A general anesthetic relaxes your muscles and puts you to sleep. All three types of anesthesia should keep you from feeling pain during the operation.

Your health care provider will cut around the cyst and remove it. Your provider will then close the cut with stitches.

What happens after the procedure?

You can go home the day you have the surgery. A bulky dressing, with or without a splint, may cover the area where you had the cyst to protect it.

Your health care provider will recommend when you should come back to get the stitches out, often in 1 to 2 weeks.

You should ask your provider what other steps you should take.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

The hand, wrist, foot, or other part of your body that had the cyst may return to normal function. The area may also feel and look better.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- There are some risks when you have anesthesia. Discuss these risks with your health care provider.
- A local or regional anesthetic may not numb the area quite enough and you may feel some minor discomfort. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the drug used in this type of anesthesia. Local or regional anesthesia is considered safer than general anesthesia.
- The cyst may come back.
- There is a small risk of infection and bleeding. However, the cut usually heals quickly without any problems.
- In rare cases, nerves or blood vessels in the area may be damaged.
- The healing cut could form an unsightly scar. Usually the scar is not noticeable in the long run.

You should ask your provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You have increasing pain despite taking the pain medicine recommended by your provider.
- You notice pus; drainage; or increasing redness, swelling, and tenderness near the cut and stitches.

Call during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.