

## Peter S. Barre, M.D.



### TRIGGER DIGIT RELEASE

**Surgery:** The surgical procedure is performed in an operating room at our office. If a single digit is being released, the procedure is usually performed under a local anesthetic (lidocaine, bupivacaine) which is injected into the palm where the incision will be made. This hurts about like a cortisone injection. You will be lying on your back with surgical drapes covering your extremity and blocking your vision of the operative site. The swollen tendon typically catches on the first pulley (the sheath that surrounds the tendon) which causes the triggering. The pulley is released which then allows the tendon to glide without catching. You will be asked to make a full fist and to straighten your finger/thumb to make sure that the triggering is relieved. A tourniquet is used during the procedure which will feel tight on your forearm or arm and is slightly uncomfortable. When surgery is complete, a bulky dressing is placed on the hand and held in place with a 2" ace wrap which loosely hold the dressing in place.

**Recovery:** The procedure takes about 20-30 minutes in the operating room. Typically, acetaminophen (tylenol) and/or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) is all you will need for the discomfort you will have after surgery. Your finger will stay numb for a period of 6-24 hours.

**Post Operative Day #1:** You may remove the dressing and it is okay to gently bathe the incision with mild, soapy water. It is okay to shower. Fully straighten your finger and try to fully flex it (make a fist) at least one time every hour while you are awake. Do not overuse the hand by hammering or forcefully gripping.

**One week office visit:** The stitches will be removed at about 8 days after surgery. Steri-strips will be applied to the wound edges to help protect the incision. These strips will fall off or can be removed after a few days. Application of a cream to the incision with gentle massage does help with maturation of the wound scar. Aloe cream, vitamin E or moisturizing cream all work well and should be worked into the wound 2-3 times a day. If you are not moving your fingers well, hand therapy will be ordered for range of motion exercises and edema control.

**Four week post operative visit:** The surgical wound will be well healed, but slightly tender. It is okay to resume all forceful activities at this point including golf, hammering and weight training. The incision will be sore for a full 2-3 months after surgery, but will steadily improve.

**Return to Work:** It is possible to return to work the day following surgery, but the surgical incision must be treated with care. Too much activity results in edema which impairs healing and creates a bed for scar tissue. Rigorous hand gripping should be delayed for about 4 weeks.