



Duke Orthopaedics: Upper Extremity Division

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Excision of Mass (Ganglion Cyst/Mucous Cyst)

What is a ganglion cyst?

A ganglion cyst is a bump coming from a joint or tendon within the hand or wrist. A cyst is a fluid-filled sac that is usually soft and mobile. The size of a cyst can change and sometimes disappear completely. Recurrence rate of ganglion cysts is higher without our surgery when compared to surgical removal.

What does surgery to remove a cyst involve?

To remove the ganglion cyst, Dr. Klifto will make an incision around the mass and separate the cyst from the normal tissue. He will trace the cyst to where it started and remove the area that allowed for the cyst to form to decrease the chance of recurrence. If the cyst is associated with an arthritic joint, he may remove osteophytes (bone spurs) to also decrease chance of recurrence.

Length of Stay

This is same-day surgery not requiring hospital admission as long as there are no complications or other health comorbidities that require attention before discharge. You will need to have someone who can stay the entire length of the procedure and take you home.

Anesthesia

Patients usually have one of two types of anesthesia for this surgery. The first is general anesthesia, which means you are asleep. The second type of anesthesia is a sedation so you will not remember the procedure. Depending on where your cyst is located, you may receive a nerve block (numbing your whole arm) or local anesthetic (numbing only area of the cyst). A nerve block will last approximately 12 hours, local anesthesia lasts approximately 2 hours. The anesthesiologist will speak to you on the day of surgery. The ultimate choice of anesthesia technique is up to you and your anesthesiologist.

Incisions

You will have a small incision around the location of the cyst. This is sometimes completed in a “V” or “L” shape for better access to the mass. The incision size will vary depending on the size of the mass.

Pain Control

You will have pain medication prescribed for you prior to discharge. After the nerve block/local anesthetic wears off you will have post-surgical discomfort, so start your pain medicine when the block begins to wear off.

Diet

The combination of anesthesia and pain medications can cause nausea in some patients. If you are prone to nausea or show signs of nausea prior to discharge, a prescription for an anti-nausea medication will be provided. You may wish to advance your diet slowly the day of surgery to avoid exacerbation of nausea. Surgery and the narcotic pain medications are very constipating. Your diet should include plenty of water, fiber, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Dressings

You will be placed in a soft gauze dressings on your wrist/hand. After 3 days you may remove the dressings. There will be small black sutures (stitches) that will be taken out at your first post-operative appointment approximately 14 days after your surgery.

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is usually not necessary after a procedure like this. At your post-operative visit approximately 2 weeks after surgery, we will discuss your progress.

Restrictions

Recovery from mass removal is approximately 6 weeks. During that time you will have restrictions on the use of your operative arm.

- Day of surgery-2 weeks: no lifting greater than 1-2 pounds with operative hand. No restrictions on range of motion of the fingers, wrist, elbow, or shoulder.
- Weeks 2-6: No lifting greater than 5-10 pounds
- Weeks 6+: No restrictions