

Removal of accessory digits in babies under local anaesthetic

This leaflet explains about additional little finger(s) or toe(s) and how they are corrected. This condition is very common, especially in certain ethnic groups and is inherited in half of all cases.

What happens if my baby does not have the operation?

The majority of these extra digits have narrow stalks and can twist at times, causing its blood supply to be cut off. This may lead into discolouration, infection and pain. Additional digits may also bring unwanted attention when your child is older.

What are the risks?

Local anaesthetic is the safest way to carry out an operation. The operation is best performed when babies are under three months of age, as they can tolerate it better. The risks, as with any type of surgery, are bleeding and infection.

What happens before the operation?

You will meet one of our plastic surgery doctors, usually in an outpatient department, where the operation will be discussed with you in greater detail, and you will be required to sign a consent form. We aim to proceed with the operation on the same day as your clinic appointment. There may be occasions, when you may have to return on another day.

If your baby is not breastfed, please ensure you bring your baby's usual formula. Because the operation is carried out under local anaesthetic, your child does not need to be nil by mouth. However we will ask you not to feed your baby for at least two to three hours prior to the procedure so that we can feed them during it.

If you are breastfeeding, you can feed your baby beforehand, so they are sleepy and relaxed during the operation.

What happens during the operation?

You can accompany your baby into the procedure room and stay with them during the procedure. Local anaesthetic is administered into the affected area. The surgeon then removes the digit(s) and applies a small dressing. Sometimes, skin glue is used over the stitches but this will peel off by itself. The operation lasts about 20 minutes for each digit.

All the stitches we use are dissolvable and will start to dissolve within two weeks.

What happens after the operation?

Your child will return to the ward and the local anaesthetic will wear off after a few hours, and your baby may feel some discomfort. Postoperative checks will be carried out by your nurse, and you will be able to leave the ward when your child is fully recovered and when your discharge letter is completed.

What to do when you get home

If your baby is still showing signs of discomfort, you can give them a dose of paracetamol that evening if it has not already been given by the nurses on the ward before your discharge. Follow the instructions on the bottle for the correct dosage.

It is advisable to make an appointment with your GP for five days after the procedure for a wound check. If you would prefer to come to Evelina, let the nurse looking after you know. Please keep the dressing clean and dry until it is reviewed in clinic, as this can be vital in preventing infection. If the dressing becomes wet, please remove it and apply a simple plaster until your review at your GP's surgery.

After your first check, the area usually doesn't need to be covered and your baby can start having baths.

When the operation site has healed (usually within two weeks) you can start moisturising and massaging the area with non-perfumed products at least once a day.

When to seek medical attention

If any of the following occur, please seek medical attention (see the Contact box):

- bleeding through the dressing
- any odour from the wound
- a temperature of 37.5°C or above
- if the area feels hot and looks red and inflamed
- if your baby is not settling after a dose of paracetamol and is in discomfort

How to contact us

If concerned, please call Clinical Nurse Specialist for paediatric plastic surgery on **t:** 020 7188 7188, ask for a switchboard and bleep 3040 or **t:** 07747 204 489. Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, or out of hours **t:** 020 7188 7188, bleep 0155 to speak to one of our doctors.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday **e:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

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