

Removing extra fingers or toes (accessory digits) under local anaesthetic

This leaflet is about a procedure to remove your baby's extra little fingers or toes (accessory digits). It explains the benefits and risks, and what to expect when you bring your baby to our hospital. If you have any questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your baby.

Removal of accessory digits

If your baby is born with extra little fingers or toes, they are called accessory digits. This is a common condition, especially in some ethnic groups, and is inherited in half of all cases.

The aim of the procedure is to remove your baby's extra fingers or toes and close the skin.

Benefits of the procedure

If your baby has extra fingers or toes, these do not usually move. For this reason, they do not help your baby.

Most extra fingers or toes have narrow stalks and can twist at times. This can cause the blood supply to be cut off. The extra fingers or toes may then become discoloured, infected or painful. They may also bring unwanted attention when your child is older.

Removing your baby's extra fingers or toes is usually a small (minor) procedure. It can:

- prevent complications
- make it easier for your baby to use their hands or feet
- improve the appearance of their hands or feet

Risks of the procedure

The safest way to do the procedure is under local anaesthetic. We give your baby an injection or injections of local anaesthetic medicine at the side of the extra finger or toe. The medicine makes the area numb but your baby stays awake for the procedure.

It is best for us to do the procedure when your baby is under 6 months old. They can then cope with it better. The risks, as with any type of procedure, are bleeding and an infection that may need to be treated with antibiotics.

If your child is over 12 months old, we usually give them a general anaesthetic. The medicine makes your child sleep during the procedure and stops them feeling any pain. Please see our separate leaflet called "Your child's surgery to remove extra fingers or toes (accessory digits)" for details.

Preparing for the procedure

You have a phone or online appointment with one of our nurse specialists. They check whether the procedure to remove extra fingers or toes under local anaesthetic is suitable for your baby.

We explain the procedure and you have time to ask us questions. After this, we put your baby on the waiting list for the procedure. It takes place in our operating theatres or children's day surgery unit.

Our admission officer contacts you and offers you a date for your baby's procedure. They tell you which ward to come to on this date.

If you are breastfeeding, you can feed your baby before the procedure or even during it. They will then be sleepy and relaxed.

If you do not breastfeed your baby, please bring their usual formula. As we do the procedure under local anaesthetic, they do not need to be nil by mouth (without food and fluids). However, we ask you not to feed your baby for at least 2 to 3 hours before the procedure. We can then feed your baby during the procedure to help them feel comfortable and content.

Giving your permission (consent)

We want to involve you in decisions about your baby's care and treatment. If you decide that you would like your baby to have the procedure, we will ask you to sign a consent form. This says that you understand what the treatment involves and agree for your baby to have it.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for your baby.

During the procedure

You can come with your baby into the procedure room or day surgery operating theatre and stay with them during the procedure.

We inject local anaesthetic medicine into the affected area to make it numb. The surgeon then removes your baby's extra fingers or toes. They close the wound with stitches and put on a small dressing.

Sometimes, the surgeon puts skin glue over the stitches. All the stitches that we use are dissolvable. They start to dissolve by themselves within 1 to 2 weeks and do not need to be removed. Any skin glue peels off by itself.

The procedure takes about 20 minutes for each extra finger or toe that we need to remove.

After the procedure

After the procedure, your baby returns to the ward. Their local anaesthetic wears off after a few hours and they may feel some discomfort.

A nurse checks your baby after the procedure. You can go home when:

- your baby has fully recovered

- we have prepared a discharge letter, which is a summary of your baby's treatment in hospital and their follow-up care

Managing any discomfort after your baby leaves hospital

If your baby is over 2 months old and still shows signs of discomfort, you can give them a recommended amount (dose) of paracetamol that evening. This is provided that our nurses have not already given your baby paracetamol before you go home.

Do not give paracetamol to babies under 2 months old, unless a doctor has prescribed this. Children can take paracetamol as a syrup from the age of 2 months.

You can buy paracetamol from a pharmacy, supermarket or shop. Paracetamol for children may also be called Calpol®.

Always follow the instructions on the bottle for the correct amount (dose) of paracetamol. If your child is small for their age, please check with a doctor or pharmacist. A lower dose may be more suitable.

Caring for your baby's wound

To prevent infection, it is important to keep your baby's dressing clean and dry until they have a wound check. This appointment is likely to be by phone or online. We look at photos of how the wound is healing.

If the dressing gets wet, please remove it. You can put a simple fabric plaster or dressing that the hospital has given you on the wound until we review your baby.

After your baby's wound check, the area does not usually need to be covered. Your baby can then start having baths again.

The wound usually heals within about 2 weeks. After 1 month, you can start moisturising and gently massaging the scar area with non-perfumed (unscented) products at least once a day.

You also need to take extra care to protect your baby's skin from the sun. For at least 1 year after the procedure, try to avoid exposing the scar to the sun. You need to put a strong sunscreen on your baby when they go outside. The label of the sunscreen should have:

- a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 50 to protect against UVB
- at least 4-star UVA protection

UVB and UVA are types of ultraviolet rays from the sun that can damage the skin.

Many brands make sunscreen especially for babies and young children. These products are less likely to contain substances that might irritate their skin.

When to get medical help

You need to contact us (please see the contact box at the end of this leaflet) if:

- the wound is bleeding through the dressing
- there is a smell coming from the wound

- your baby is under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38C or higher, or you think that they have a high temperature
- your baby is 3 to 6 months old and has a temperature of 39C or higher, or you think that they have a high temperature
- the area feels hot, and looks red and inflamed (on brown and black skin, the area can appear red or purple but it may be more difficult to notice the redness)
- your baby does not settle after having a dose of paracetamol and is in discomfort

If you are very concerned or notice these symptoms outside working hours (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), call 111 or go to A&E.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the clinical nurse specialist for children's (paediatric) plastic surgery, **phone** 07747 204 489, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

If you are concerned about your baby out of hours, please go to your nearest emergency department (A&E), walk-in clinic or GP surgery as appropriate. They can then contact our plastic surgery team, if needed.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** www.evelinalondon.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, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm **email** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint, contact the resolution department **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your child's care in a different language or format, please contact the department where your child has the appointment.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers. They are supported by experienced nurses and paramedics, **phone** 111 (24 hours a day) **web** www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare. It can help you to take care of your child's health and wellbeing, **web** www.nhs.uk



Leaflet number: 4465/VER3

Date published: May 2024

Review date: May 2027

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A list of sources is available on request