



Common Sense in Medicine

This information is based on patient interaction of over twenty-five years in the office of Dr. David Hubler M.D. Orthopedic Surgeon

A Lump on My Wrist

Usually these lumps that appear on either the top or the bottom of the wrist are cysts called “ganglions”. They are usually painless and harmless. But, they may put pressure on surrounding nerves or blood vessels and become painful. They can get large and unsightly.

In the old west, the doctors would place the patient’s wrist on a table and hit the cyst with the heavy family Bible. This would get rid of about 15% of them. Using common sense the other 85% were never mentioned to “Doc” again.

The cyst is formed when joint fluid leaks from a joint or tendon and forms a small “water balloon”. If the joint is moved very much, more fluid goes into the balloon and the cyst gets larger. If the cyst has only been present for about a month, wearing a wrist splint will frequently shrink and heal it. Draining the fluid from it and injecting it with hydrocortisone may help.

If the cyst causes problems, it is removed with outpatient surgery. It is best to wear a wrist splint for six weeks after

surgery to minimize the chance of it coming back. Since we don’t know why they form, we don’t know if the one that reappears after surgery is a new one that just developed or the old one that came back. Patients are able to resume full activities in a wrist splint in a few days.

Ganglions can occur along any joint or tendon. Frequently they are found at the end joint or base of fingers, or the outside of ankles. Sometimes if they are small, they can be the cause of pain in a joint or along a tendon and are found only with an MRI or an ultrasound test.

Many people are self conscious about the lumps. But once you have one, you notice them on lots of your friends. Since you didn’t notice them before, common sense says most people won’t notice them on you.

**The Ganglion Cyst
by David Hubler MD**

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