



Synovial (Ganglion) Cyst of the Wrist

Synovial cysts, also known as **ganglion cysts**, are the most common benign lumps in the wrist and hand.

They form when **synovial fluid**, which lubricates joints and tendons, leaks outside the joint or tendon sheath and collects under the skin, creating a fluid-filled sac.

Why Do They Happen?

The exact cause is unknown, but may be related to:

- Minor trauma or repetitive use of the wrist.
- A small tear or defect in the joint capsule or tendon sheath, allowing fluid to escape and collect.
- Formation of a “valve” mechanism that lets fluid in but not out.

How Does It Present?

Your child may have:

- A soft, round or oval **lump under the skin**, usually 1–2 cm, which may change in size.
- A lump that may become **more noticeable with certain wrist positions**, like bending the wrist forward (flexion) or backward (extension).
- No pain, or mild discomfort with joint movement or pressure.
- In some cases, **reduced grip strength**, numbness, or tingling if the cyst presses on a nerve.

Most cysts are **translucent** when light is shined through and feel firm but flexible.

About **25% of cases are bilateral**, but often not at the same time.

Consult your doctor if your child...



- Has **pain, weakness, or numbness**.
- The cyst interferes with **daily activities**.
- The lump increases in size, becomes red, or doesn't improve.

More sheets are available at www.epos.org/parent-info. This sheet may also be available in other languages.



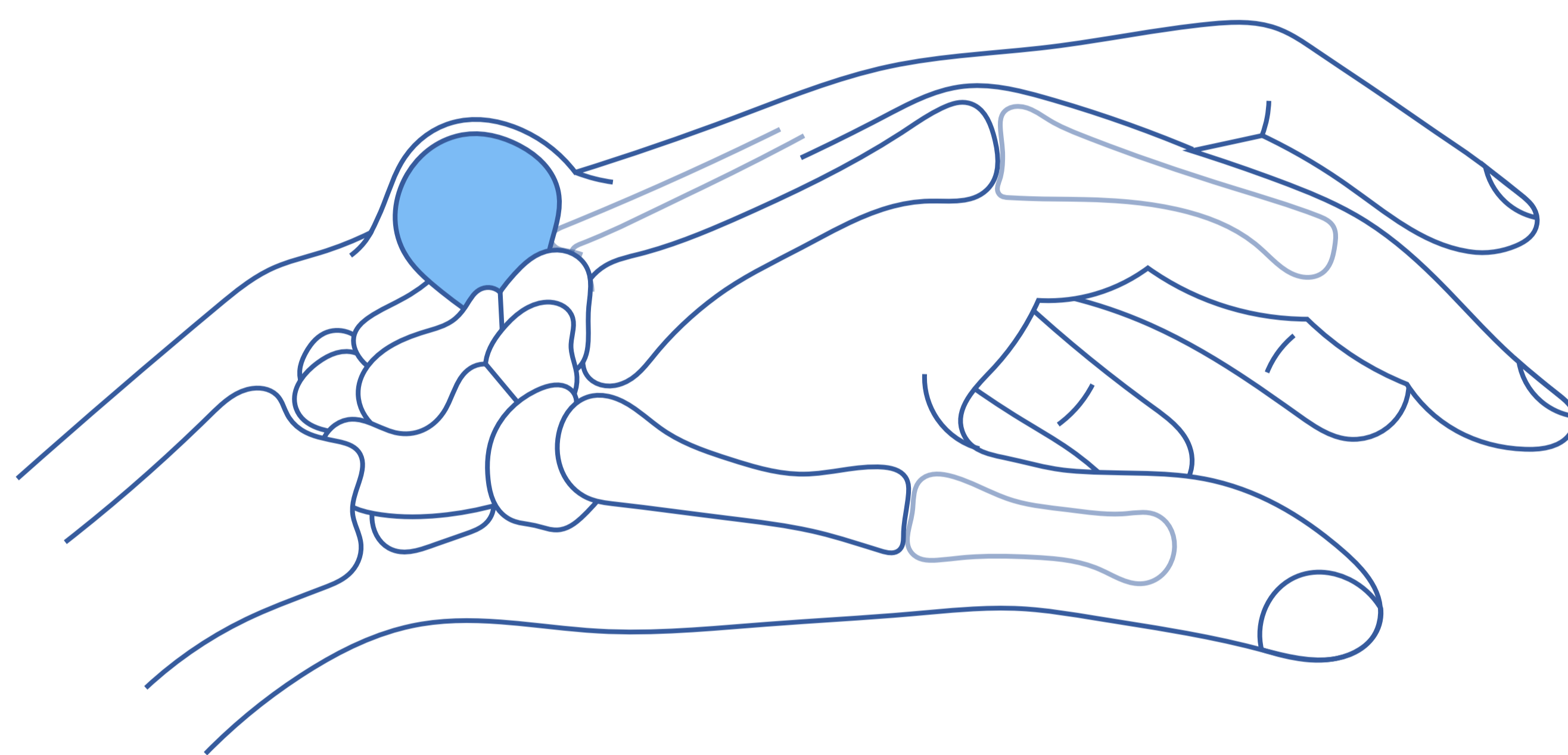
Additional information



- Synovial cysts are **not cancerous**.
- Most are **painless and harmless**.
- Do **NOT** attempt to rupture the cyst at home, as this can be dangerous and is not effective.

How Is It Diagnosed?

- Diagnosis is **clinical**, based on appearance and physical exam.
- Imaging is rarely needed, but **ultrasound** may help if the diagnosis is unclear.
- **X-rays** do not show the cyst but can rule out other issues.



How Is It Treated?

Observation

- Most synovial cysts in children **disappear on their own** over time.

Conservative treatment

- Activity modification may help reduce discomfort.
- Anti-inflammatory medications can help if there's mild pain.

Surgical treatment

- Surgery is considered if the cyst is **painful**, causes **functional problems**, or persists despite observation.
- The procedure removes the cyst and its connection to the joint or tendon.
- Recovery is usually quick and recurrence rates are variable.