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Claw hand

Claw hand is a condition that causes curved or bent fingers. This makes the hand appear like the claw of an animal.

Considerations

Someone can be born with claw hand (congenital), or they can develop it because of certain disorders, such as a nerve injury.

Causes

Causes may include:

- Congenital abnormality
- Genetic diseases, such as from Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease
- Nerve damage in the arm
- Scarring after a severe burn of the hand or forearm
- Rare infections, such as leprosy

When to Contact a Medical Professional

If the condition is congenital, it is usually diagnosed at birth. If you notice claw hand developing, contact your health care provider.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

Your provider will examine you and look closely at your hands and feet. You will be asked questions about your medical history and symptoms.

The following tests may be done to check for nerve damage:

- Electromyography (EMG) to check the health of the muscles and the nerves that control the muscles
- Nerve conduction studies to check how fast electrical signals move through a nerve

Treatment depends on the cause. It may include:

- Splinting

- Surgery to fix problems that may be contributing to the claw hand, such as nerve or tendon problems, joint contractures, or scar tissue
- Tendon transfer (graft) to allow movement of the hand and wrist
- Hand therapy to straighten the fingers

Alternative Names

Ulnar nerve palsy - claw hand; Ulnar nerve dysfunction - claw hand; Ulnar claw

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Updated by: C. Benjamin Ma, MD, Professor, Chief, Sports Medicine and Shoulder Service, UCSF Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, San Francisco, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

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