

Hand Relief Made Easy

Dupuytren's Contracture is the systematic disease that causes a progressive, irregular thickening of the tissue in the palm of the hand. After awhile, a rope-like cord may develop on some patients and will cause the finger to permanently bend towards the palm of the hand. The cord can be seen and felt by the patient, causing the patient to actually feel like there is a wire underneath the skin. Although Dupuytren's Contracture is not painful, the condition can make it difficult to perform everyday tasks such as shaking hands and putting on gloves.

In the past, complex surgery was the only way to treat patients with Dupuytren's Contracture. This surgery would leave scarring and a need for physical therapy sessions. Also, because Dupuytren's Contracture is a reoccurring disease and cannot be completely stopped by surgery or medication, surgery would have to be repeated multiple times. However, there is now a highly effective non-surgical treatment called XIAFLEX that was approved in February 2010 by the FDA.

XIAFLEX is a simple injection with a small gauge needle and small volume of medication. On the day of the injection the doctor will begin by examining the

Dupuytren cord that is causing the contracture. Once the injection site is confirmed the skin around the injection site will be cleaned with an antiseptic. The small gauge needle will then inject Xiaflex directly into the cord at three slightly different positions. The doctor will ask the patient to keep their hand elevated until bedtime.

"On the day of the procedure the patient will come in for the appointment," said Dr. Robert Falender, an OrthoIndy physician. "The drug takes about 15 minutes to reconstitute. The hand is cleansed with soap and the area where the cord is thickest is injected. The hand is then wrapped in a sterile dressing. The actual injection takes about 15 seconds."

Twenty-four hours later, the patient returns and the fingers are numbed with a local anesthetic which enables manipulation of the fingers in order to straighten them. This process normally takes less than a minute, and a loud pop is heard when the cord breaks. Sometimes, the bent finger may straighten on its own before this appointment. Patients are able to use their hands immediately.



Thirty days later there is usually a follow-up visit to decide whether or not another injection is needed. XIAFLEX may be given up to three times per cord at four week intervals. If the patient has more than one cord the doctor will only inject one cord at a time and the cords will be treated in a sequential order. Additionally, because the disease is reoccurring, XIAFLEX is the easy way to control it.

This injection does not leave scars or require post-operative therapy, unlike the alternative treatment, surgery, used to straighten Dupuytren's Contracture. Instead, the physician will give the patient a series of finger exercises that can be done at home several times a day for several months. In some cases, a splint may be worn at night for up to four months.

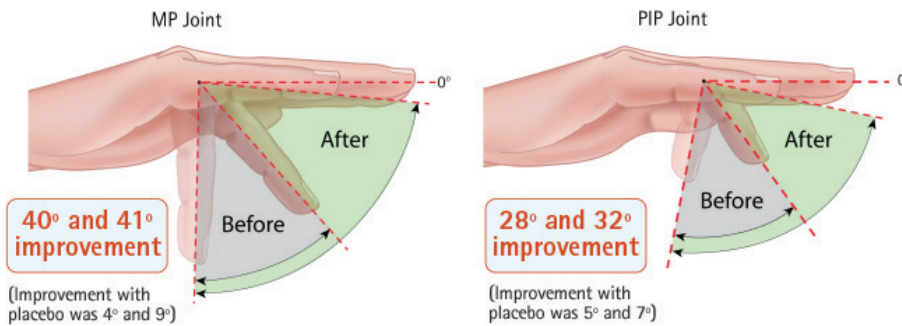
"Since there is no incision, recovery is much faster as compared to surgery," said Dr. Falender. "Some will require hand therapy afterwards to help with range of motion, but the pain is much less than surgery for Dupuytren's Contracture."

Most patients are able to benefit from XIAFLEX injections and manipulation. Only patients who have significant scar tissue from previous hand surgeries or non-palpable-inaccessible cords are not candidates

for the injection. Sometimes two injections are needed on some patients with certain contractures.

Common side effects with XIAFLEX include: swelling of the injection site or the hand, bleeding or bruising at the injection site; and pain or tenderness of the injection site or the hand, swelling of the lymph nodes (glands) in the elbow or underarm, itching, breaks in the skin, redness or warmth of the skin and pain in the underarm.

"I think this drug could be very helpful for many people who have Dupuytren's Contracture that interferes with daily activities," said Falender. "The drug is potentially a simpler way to handle many cases of this disease without the need for surgery. The drug should only be used by physicians who are very familiar with hand anatomy and are properly trained in its use."



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Robert H. Falender, MD

Practice Focus
General Orthopaedics
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To schedule an appointment with Dr. Falender please call: **(317) 884-5167.**