



CONDITION

What is an Enchondroma?

This is an overgrowth of soft cartilage-like tissue within a bone. In more than 50% of cases the overgrowth occurs in the small bones of the hands or feet. It is commonest between the ages of 10-50. They are usually isolated to one bone but very occasionally can be found in many bones at once.



Note expanded bone compared to next fingers and thinning of the walls (cortex) of the bone

Enchondroma in proximal phalanx of ring finger

What problems can an Enchondroma cause?

Often an enchondroma is seen incidentally on an xray taken for some other reason and the patient had not noticed any symptoms. In some cases the swelling weakens the bone and results in the bone breaking, often with very little force. In the rare case of many bones being affected at once function can be more severely affected.

There is a tiny chance of a single enchondroma becoming malignant (cancerous) over time (only a few cases reported in world literature) but this chance is increased when multiple bones are affected.

The cartilage swelling may also weaken the surrounding strong bone so increasing the chance of a break, sometimes with very little force. In the rare cases where many bones are involved function can be more severely affected. In single enchondromata there is a tiny chance of the swelling becoming malignant but this chance is increased when multiple bones are affected.

How is the diagnosis made?

Xrays usually confirm the diagnosis; more detailed scans are not usually required in the hand.

What treatments are available for enchondroma?

With no symptoms a review in clinic with xrays is all that is required.

If the bone is broken standard treatment for the fracture is undertaken. Once the bone has healed a small operation to open up the bone, scrape out the soft cartilage and fill the hole with bone graft might be needed. Your surgeon will advise you about the best option for you.