



# Ganglion and Other Deep Cysts

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## **What's the problem?**

Synovial cysts, ganglia and cutaneous mucoid cysts are essentially the same thing. All three refer to a fluid filled mass under the skin. Most are located under the skin, although occasionally they may be found in tendon or bone.

## **How does it feel?**

Many mucous cysts are painless. Some people are worried about the way it looks; others worry that it may be a serious problem. The cysts are more likely to cause pain or discomfort when they are on the foot, because of pressure created by shoes on them. Occasionally, the cyst encloses or presses on a nerve, causing a shooting, electric type of pain.

## **How did this happen?**

The cysts may form on their own, or may branch out from a joint. Most doctors feel that these cysts form as a result of small injuries that occur repeatedly over a long period of time. Think about them as bubbles made of a thin layer of specialized cells that produce and surround the fluid.

## **How are cysts diagnosed?**

Your doctor can identify a mucous cyst by how it feels when he/she touches it. In some cases, the doctor may order an x-ray, ultrasound, MRI, or CT. Rarely; a doctor might order an arthrogram, where dye is injected into the cyst, in an attempt to see if it is connected to a joint or tendon sheath.

## **How can I care for myself?**

Anytime you notice a lump or mass, you should have it checked out by a doctor as soon as possible, even if it isn't painful. If the cyst isn't painful, it may be best to just watch it to see if it changes over time. If you have a painful ganglion, you can try padding the area around the lump or try changing your shoe gear to relieve the pressure.

## **How will my doctor care for my cysts?**

Your podiatrist will look at and feel the lump. If it is a ganglion, the doctor will numb the area, and then try to pull as much fluid out of the cyst as possible using a syringe. Many doctors will then inject a steroid or hardening agent into the cyst to try and prevent it from filling again. About half of the time, the cyst will fill up again after the treatment. The doctor will then give you the option of having it removed surgically.

## **How can I prevent it from happening again?**

The best thing you can do to avoid forming these cysts is to wear loose fitting comfortable shoes that don't injure the feet. It is especially important to avoid wearing shoes that are tight over the bony top of the foot or instep, where many of these cysts form.

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