Syndactyly

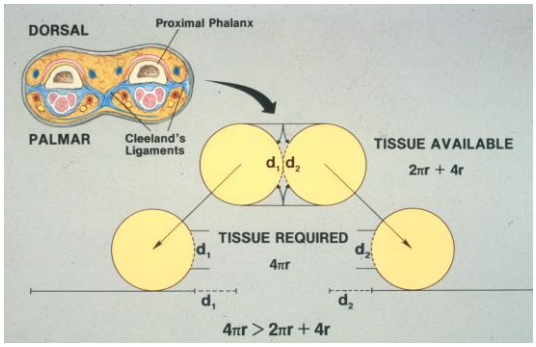
Approximately 1 in 2000 babies is born with an abnormal connection between 2 or more of their fingers or toes. This condition is called syndactyly. It is most common between the middle and index fingers and least common between the thumb and index fingers. It can occur in one or both hands and sometimes runs in families. It may occur as a part of a syndrome or in an otherwise normal, healthy child.

The extent of the connection between the fingers varies from child to child. A simple syndactyly is one in which the fingers are connected only by skin, while a complex syndactyly has either partial or complete fusion of the bones.

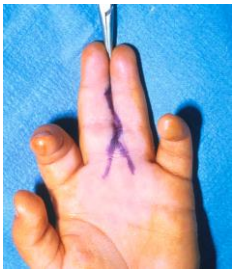
Webbing of the toes also may occur, most commonly between the 2nd and 3rd toes. This is usually a cosmetic problem only and rarely requires treatment.

Treatment

Unless the small finger or the thumb is involved, separation of the fingers is usually delayed until the child is 4 to 24 months of age. This allows for some growth of the hand, making surgery technically easier. The extent of surgery depends on the complexity of the syndactyly. A skin graft is almost always necessary because the tissue necessary to cover two separate fingers is greater than the tissue available. A common site to harvest the skin is from the lower portion of the abdomen.



The hand is usually casted for several weeks after surgery to protect the surgical site while it heals.

Figures A & B show the skin incisions for separating the long and ring finger
Figure C shows the separated fingers and the skin graft held in place with numerous sutures
Figure D demonstrates the healed fingers