

# Enchondroma

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

Enchondromas are noncancerous bone tumours that start in the cartilage. Most bones develop from cartilage, which is a gristly connective tissue. Cartilage is a crucial component of the growth process. In the human body, there are numerous different forms of cartilage. The cartilage that borders the inside of the bones is most commonly affected by an enchondroma. The delicate long bones of the hands and feet are frequently affected. Other bones, such as the thighbone (femur), upper arm bone (humerus), or one of the two lower leg bones, may be affected (tibia). The majority of enchondromas are solitary tumours. Multiple tumours can, however, arise in rare circumstances as part of a condition called Ollier's disease or Maffucci's syndrome. Single enchondromas seldom turn malignant, though people with Ollier's illness and Maffucci's syndrome have a slightly greater risk. When enchondromas become cancerous, they commonly transform into chondrosarcomas, a type of malignant cartilage tumour.

## SYMPTOMS

Enchondromas are usually painless and do not cause any symptoms. The bone can deteriorate and become misshapen if the tumours arise in the hands or feet, or if there are many lesions. Pathologic bone fractures and swelling of the affected fingers are possible outcomes. Bone abnormalities in patients with Ollier's illness and Maffucci's syndrome can be fairly severe. If pain from other sources has been ruled out, your doctor will examine the tumour carefully to see if it is a low-grade chondrosarcoma. Pain that occurs at night

or while you are sleeping is more likely to be caused by a malignant tumour.

## DIAGNOSIS

**X-Ray:** On plain film, an enchondroma can be found in any cartilage-covered bone. Except in the phalanges, they are lytic lesions with calcified chondroid matrix (a "rings and arcs" pattern of calcification). They can be central, eccentric, expansile, or nonexpansile in nature. **CT Scan:** A computed tomography scan (also known as a CT or CAT scan) is a diagnostic imaging process that produces cross-sectional images (commonly referred to as slices) of the body using a mix of x-rays and computer technology. A CT scan provides detailed images of the bones, muscles, fat, and organs in any section of the body. CT scans provide more information than standard x-rays.

## TREATMENT

Curettage is the most common surgical method for treating enchondromas. The tumour is scraped out of the bone during curettage. The majority of enchondromas will not reappear once they have been removed. Your doctor will normally wait for the fracture to heal before treating the tumour if a tumour has fractured your bone. To avoid further fracture, the tumour will be curetted out. A bone transplant is a piece of bone extracted from a donor or another bone in your body (autograft). Another substance may be used to fill the void in some circumstances. On x-ray, some tumours appear to be simple enchondromas, yet they are painful. The treatment of these lesions is debatable.

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