

Syndactyly

What Is Syndactyly?

Syndactyly occurs in children who have webbed fingers or toes. About half of the children who are diagnosed with syndactyly report having it in both hands. There are three main types. Simple syndactyly means the fingers are joined by skin and soft tissue. Complex syndactyly means the underlying bones are joined together. Complicated syndactyly is when there are extra bones, tendons and ligaments.

What Causes Syndactyly?

When a baby is in the womb, their hands and feet form in the shape of a paddle. Over several weeks, the fingers and toes separate. Syndactyly happens when the fingers or toes do not separate. So, is syndactyly hereditary? Yes. It can be passed down from a parent or be the cause of other genetic conditions.

Syndactyly Symptoms and Effects

The main symptom of syndactyly is webbed fingers or toes. It can range from minor webbing to joint underlying bones. The affected fingers or toes also may not move well. Your child's provider also may look for [macroductyly](#) or [polydactyly](#), which are conditions that also affect hands and feet.

Syndactyly Diagnosis and Treatment

Syndactyly is diagnosed at birth but can sometimes be detected during a prenatal ultrasound. An x-ray is used to assess the underlying structure of your child's fingers and toes. Your provider may also look at your child's arms, shoulders, chest and head. This is to see if there are any other abnormalities and whether they are all connected.

Surgery is used to treat syndactyly when a child is between 1 and 2 years old. During the surgery, the skins is split evenly between the toe fingers or toes. If needed, a skin graft is used to cover the newly separated finger or toe. Skin grafts can be taken from the elbow or wrist. If several fingers are involved, several surgeries may be needed to minimize the risk of complications.

After syndactyly surgery, your child will wear a cast or bandage. Your child's provider may suggest occupational therapy to manage stiffness and improve function.

When you come to Gillette, your child will receive care in a family-centered environment, designed to help your child achieve their highest possible levels of independence, comfort and happiness.

Gillette offers fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeons who specialize in caring for children, along with a vast team of collaborative experts in a variety of specialties. You'll get help understanding which specialty areas might be best for your child—for polydactyly treatment, your family might work with experts in:

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- [Child life](#)
- Nursing
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- [Orthopedics](#)
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If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](#).