

Patient Information Sheet

- Mallet finger fracture

What do I need to know?

What is my diagnosis?

You have broken (fractured) one of the bones in your finger. It is important that this injury is treated correctly to achieve a good outcome for your hand. Your finger must be kept straight in the splint provided **at all times** for the next 6 weeks.

What does my X-ray look like?



What happens next?

Your X-rays will be reviewed by a radiologist (X-ray expert) and an Orthopaedic surgeon. In most circumstances, no further appointments will be needed and you should simply follow the advice below. Occasionally, patients need to come back to clinic and if this is necessary, we will contact you directly.

What should I expect during recovery?

Weeks 1 and 2

- The tip of the finger will be painful during this period
- Simple pain killers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen should be sufficient to manage your pain
- It is very important that you still move the joint in the middle of your finger as well as your knuckle to avoid stiffness

Weeks 2-6

- The pain will begin to reduce
- You should continue to use the splint **at all times** except when washing your finger (see '**Managing your splint**')

Weeks 7 and 8

- At this stage you can **remove the splint during the day** but it should **still be used at night time and during sports** for the next 2 weeks
- The finger should be straight but will be swollen and stiff for several more weeks.
- If by week 8 you still have concerns please get in touch using the details overleaf

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What if my finger does not heal?

It is extremely uncommon for this fracture not to heal. However, occasionally some patients are left with an 'extensor lag' which is when there is a small droop at the tip of the finger. This rarely affects the actual function of your hand and should not cause concern. Very occasionally a bad fracture can result in some arthritis of the joint, and surgery could be considered in order to stiffen the joint permanently if necessary. Please contact us via the advice email address if you still have problems with your finger three months after the injury.

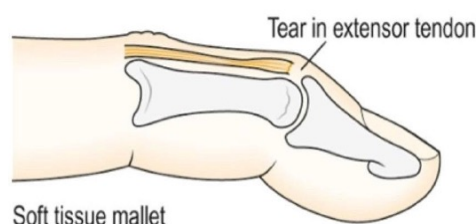
Managing your splint

To wash your finger you must keep the finger straight and use the support of a table. If the tip of your finger bends during treatment, your fracture may not heal properly.



Similar injuries

Sometimes the bone does not break but instead you tear the tendon on the back of the finger known as the 'extensor tendon'. This can be seen in the image below and is known as a 'soft tissue' mallet finger. It is treated in the same way.



Get in touch

Please get in touch via our trauma email if you are still having problems with your finger in three months time:

traumaenquiriesRIE@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

If you do not receive a reply after 3 working days call our helpline: 0131 2423410

Urgent issues

Please call the Minor Injuries Unit helpline on 0131 2423942 of any urgent issues.