

Advice after a ‘mallet finger’ injury

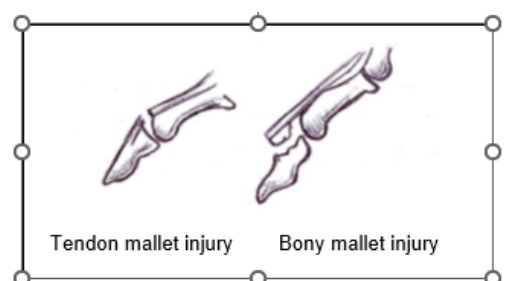
Fracture Clinic Patient Information Leaflet

The Injury

A mallet finger is a common injury to the end joint of your finger, either a bone or tendon injury. This causes the fingertip to droop.

The symptoms following this type of injury often include:

- Pain straight after an injury
- Swelling
- Inability to straighten the end joint of your finger without help



What happens now?

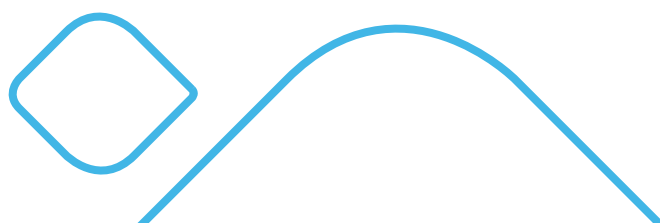
Your finger will be put in a splint to support the injury; you will need to wear this at all times for either six weeks (bone injury) or eight weeks (tendon injury). After this period, you will need to continue wearing your splint at night and when doing activities during the day for two further weeks. Use a non-stretch tape.

You will need to keep the finger and splint dry. Whilst cleaning the finger every day it is important to only remove the splint with your finger supported straight on a table.

You will be given an appointment to return to the fracture clinic for review at the appropriate time. This is either six or eight weeks after splinting the finger. If you think that the splint does not fit well enough to keep the finger tip straight, then please contact the clinic for an earlier appointment.

What should I do at home?

Most mallet injuries heal without any problems in about eight weeks. However, it may take several months for your symptoms to settle completely. These can include pain or discomfort, stiffness, decreased strength and swelling. The injury may take longer to heal if you suffer from diabetes or if you smoke.



For advice on stopping smoking please visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree or discuss this with your GP.

Once the injury has started to heal some people might be referred to their local physiotherapy department for assessment, advice and rehabilitation.

Splint care



The splinted finger must be kept clean and dry at all times. If the skin becomes wet inside the splint, it will become very sore. It's important to wash both your finger and the splint at least once a day, following these instructions:

- Keep your finger flat on the table, cut the strapping, and slide the splint off your finger.
- Wash and dry your finger and the splint using soap and water. Keep the end joint straight at all times by keeping your finger flat on the table. You may find it easier if someone helps you to do this each day. Any movement of the end of the finger will delay healing and may even cause permanent damage.
- Slide the splint back over the fingertip, still keeping the finger straight
- Replace the strapping, with a non-stretchy tape – this should cover the middle of the splint but not the middle joint of the finger.

Exercises

With the splint in the correct position you should still be able to bend your finger at the middle joint. To prevent this joint from becoming stiff you should do this ten times a day.

If you have any worries or concerns please contact one of the following:

Virtual Fracture Clinic Helpline 01225 821668 or Fracture Clinic 01225 825602

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.