

# Mallet Finger

## Hand Therapy Patient Information

### What is Mallet Finger and how is it caused?

Mallet Finger is a deformity associated with the inability to straighten the fingertip. It is caused by damage to the tendon or bone involved in straightening the tip of the finger. This can occur when the fingertip is forcefully bent e.g. ball hits a fingertip or tucking in bedsheets. The extensor tendon can rupture ('a tendinous mallet') or pull off a small piece of bone ('a bony mallet').

### What are the symptoms of Mallet Finger?

- The end of the finger is bent and cannot be straightened voluntarily.
- The finger is often painful and swollen around the tip.

### How is it treated?

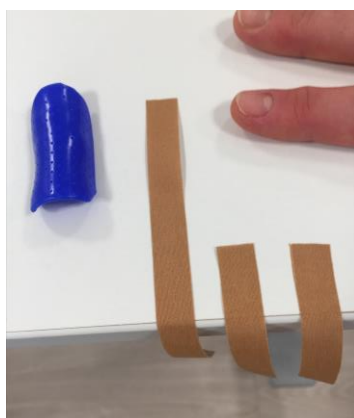
The end of the finger is splinted in a straight position **at all times**, for a period of 6-8 weeks. You will be advised on the exact length of time by your healthcare professional. You will be taught how to safely manage your splint and to maintain hand hygiene. It is very important that the end joint does not bend during the period of splinting. Following this, you will begin to wean out of the splint, gradually increasing your movement.

**Advice:**

- Maintain good skin condition under the splint to avoid skin breakdown, by regularly removing the splint for hygiene purposes.
- Regularly raise your hand if it is swollen, particularly when at rest.
- Exercise wrist and other finger joints to reduce stiffness, including the middle joint of the affected finger (the tape and splint should not restrict this movement).
- When replacing or removing the splint (for hygiene only), always keep the end of the finger supported in a straight position. If you don't, you will have to restart the recovery process from day one.

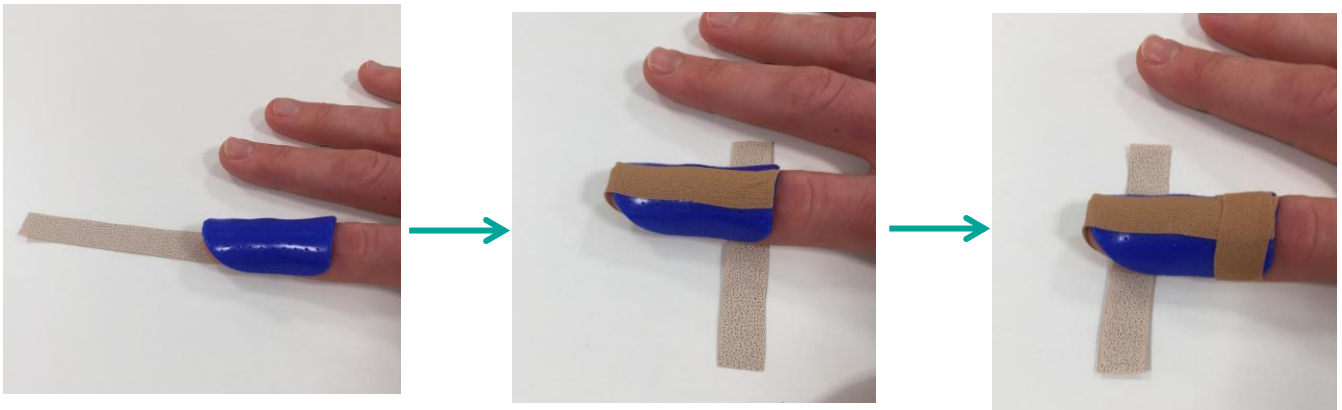
**Taking care of your finger and replacing the splint**

1. Before removing the splint, ensure you have a bowl of water and cloth to clean the finger, as well as preparing the tape needed to put it back on. You should cut one long piece and short pieces of tape (as shown below).
2. Place hand on a hard, flat surface.
3. Remove tape slowly, ensuring the end of the finger is supported in a straight position at all times. **N.B. This can be tricky to do with only one hand. It would be helpful to have someone to help you.**



4. Clean finger with warm soapy water, taking care not to bend the tip of the finger. The splint can also be washed in mildly warm water.

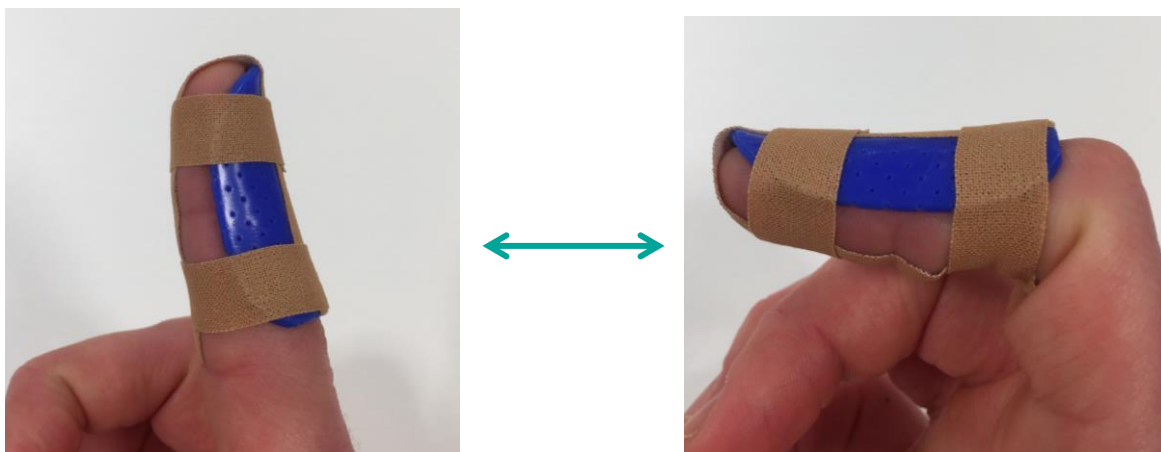
5. Dry the splint and finger and re-apply the splint. Apply first strip of tape along the underneath of the finger up and over the top of the splint. Then apply two strips of tape around the finger and splint, ensuring that the end of the finger is in full extension.



## Exercising your finger

Whilst in the splint, it is important to maintain the movement in the unaffected joints. We recommend bending and straightening the joints that are not splinted, approximately 10 times, every 2 hours

Do not use your hand for any heavy lifting or forceful movements.



If you have a long mallet splint, which has a velcro strap attached, the velcro will need to be released in order to exercise the joint every hour. Bend and straighten the free joint 10-15 times, every 2 hours. Then, once you've finished, reapply the velcro strap.



### 8+ Weeks

After 8 weeks of splinting, you will be advised to begin gentle exercises in order to regain movement in the joint that was immobilised. This may include short periods of splinting during the day and continuing to wear the splint at night for the next 2-4 weeks.

**If you have any problems in the future, please contact your physiotherapist.  
Contact details are below.**

#### **Hand Therapy**

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email [ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656 / 826319.