

Caring for a mallet finger injury

Emergency Department

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: February 2024

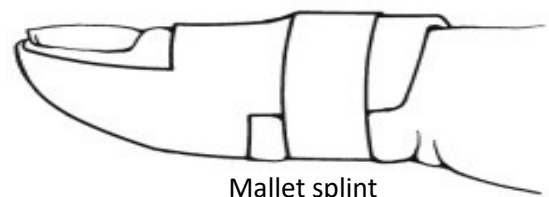
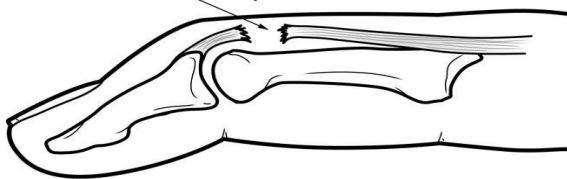
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Leaflet number: 1012 Version: 2

What is a mallet finger injury?

When you damage (rupture) the tendon that straightens the end joint of your finger, this is called a non-bony "mallet" injury. Your finger tip will droop and you will not be able to straighten the end of your finger. The finger is usually painful and swollen.

Extensor Tendon Rupture



Mallet splint

How is it treated?

Most mallet finger injuries are treated with splinting. This will be applied at your first visit to the Emergency Department. A splint will hold the fingertip straight at the end joint, until it heals. It is held in place with tape and must be worn at all times for 8 weeks, to allow the tendon ends to heal.

You should only remove the splint 1 to 2 times a day to clean your finger.

The middle joint of the finger is left free so you can continue to move it to prevent any stiffness developing. The splint is applied to keep the tip of your finger straight when the hand is in use.

How do I keep my finger clean?

Rest your hand and finger flat on a table and remove the tape and splint. Clean your finger with a wet cloth, and dry fully. Slide the splint back on over your fingertip, keeping your finger straight.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

It is very important that you do not bend the end of your finger whilst cleaning or when it is splinted, as this may delay or prevent the tendon from healing fully.

When will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will have a follow-up appointment in the Soft Tissue Review Clinic at the Leicester General hospital at 4 weeks. This is to check that the tendon is healing well. You will be sent this appointment in the post.

You will have a further appointment in the Soft Tissue Review Clinic at 8 weeks. If the tendon has healed your splint will be removed. We will tell you to start gentle exercises to the joints of your affected finger. You will need to continue to wear the splint for a further 4 weeks at night.

What other advice should I follow?

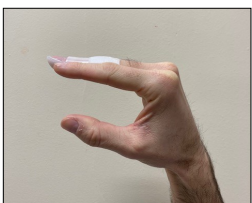
Do not:

- try to check if the finger is healing by bending the fingertip. **Only** do this when you are told to do so by a health professional.
- wear any rings on this finger until the splint is removed at 8 weeks. Swelling may make it difficult to remove a ring later, or the ring may cut off blood supply to your finger.

Do:

- keep your splint clean and dry at all times. If the skin inside the splint gets wet it may become very sore.
- exercise all finger joints, except the splinted joint.
- apply an ice pack that is wrapped in a towel, a few times a day for 5 minutes, as this can help reduce pain and swelling in the first few days.

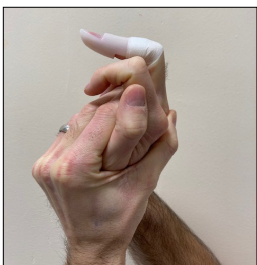
Exercises whilst wearing the mallet splint



Exercise 1

Bend and straighten your knuckle joints

Repeat up to 10 times.



Exercise 2

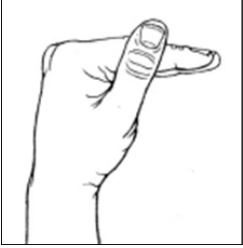
Hold below the middle joint of your injured finger. Bend and straighten the middle finger joint.

Repeat up to 10 times.

Exercises for when the mallet splint is removed

At your 2nd visit to Soft Tissue Review Clinic at 8 weeks, you will be advised to start these exercises if your mallet injury has healed.

Do the exercises up to 3 times daily.



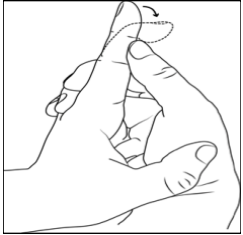
Exercise 1

Keeping the fingers straight, bend at just the knuckles.
Repeat up to 10 times



Exercise 2

Hold the finger so that only the middle joint moves. Bend and straighten the middle finger joint.
Repeat up to 10 times.



Exercise 3

Hold the finger so that only the end joint moves.
Bend and straighten the end of your finger gently.
Repeat up to 10 times



Exercise 4

Keep the wrist and fingers straight. Gently make a fist, then straighten the fingers. Repeat up to 10 times.

Contact details

Emergency Department - Minor Injuries Unit, Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 5727

Soft Tissue Review Clinic: 0116 258 8296

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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