

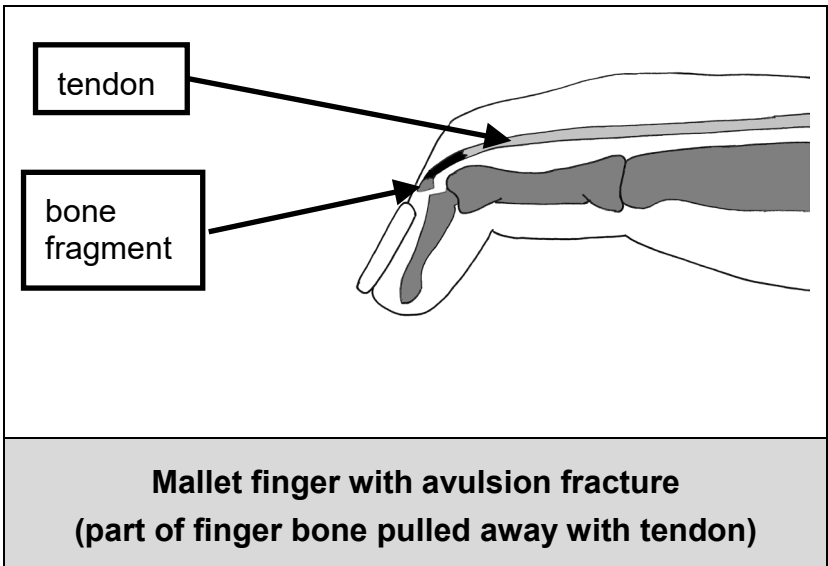
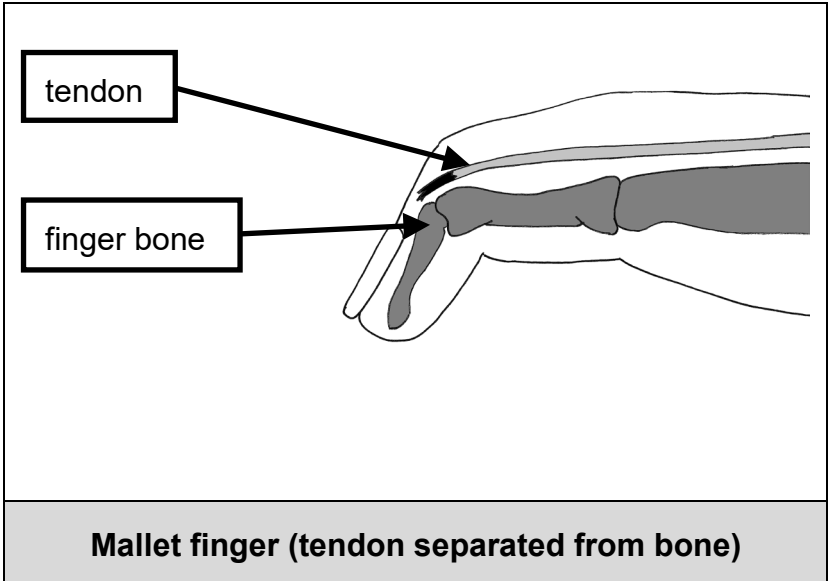


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Mallet finger

***Information for
patients and carers***



What is a mallet finger injury?

A mallet finger injury causes the tip of your finger to lie in a bent position and you can't straighten it.

This happens because you have snapped the tendon that normally straightens the end joint of your finger (see diagrams opposite).

The tendon may even pull off a small fragment of bone (called an avulsion fracture).

You will have pain and swelling over the end of the finger.

You probably had an X-ray to confirm your diagnosis.

What causes mallet finger?

Common causes include:

- Catching the finger “end-on” during sport.
- Minor injury such as catching the finger when tucking in bed sheets.

What is the treatment?

We put a splint on your finger to help it heal. Wear this splint all the time, even at night, for 8 weeks (6 weeks if you have been advised there is a bony fragment).

You must keep your finger straight, at all times, even when taking the splint off to wash.

We'll show you how to change your splint safely.

After 6 to 8 weeks, the physiotherapist will review your progress and give you exercises that will help you get full movement back in your finger.

You will need to wear the splint intermittently for another 2 weeks.

After you've stopped using the splint (around 10 to 12 weeks), keep moving the finger and gradually go back to daily activities as your pain allows. This helps to improve any stiffness and help your finger get back to normal. Take care in the next 2 to 4 weeks not to re-injure your finger.

After 12 weeks, you should be back to normal activity.

**Please remember while your finger is healing,
bending it just once could prevent healing.**

How effective is the treatment?

Most injuries heal without any problems. It may take several months to get the full use of your finger again.

There may be redness, swelling and slight pain over the joint for a few months afterwards. This will settle.

Mallet fractures may leave a small bump on the top of the end joint and slight loss of bending of the joint. However, pain is rare and the finger generally functions well.

Severe mallet fractures sometimes need surgery, especially if the fracture has allowed the end joint to drop out of alignment, but the results are not consistently good.

How do I wash my finger?

Only wash your finger twice a week at first to reduce the chance of the finger bending.

1. Place your hand flat on a table, remove the splint and clean the finger.
2. Replace the splint without bending your finger.
3. You must keep your finger and splint dry to avoid irritating your skin.

Contact details

Plastic Surgery Dressings Clinic
Purple Zone, Level 1
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

☎ 01224 552727

Physiotherapy Outpatients Reception
Woodend Hospital

☎ 01224 556783

Orthopaedic Outpatients Reception
Woodend Hospital

☎ 01224 556665

David Lawrie and Clare Miller's secretary

☎ 01224 556755

Woodend nurses/plaster room

☎ 01224 556370

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