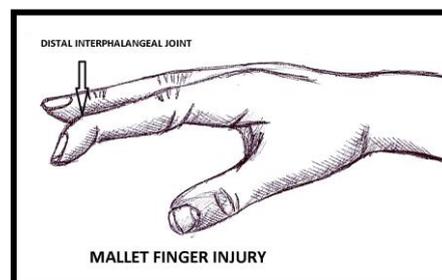


# Mallet Finger Injury

This leaflet offers more information about mallet finger injury. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the hand therapist in charge of your care.

## What is a mallet finger injury?

A mallet finger is when the tendon that straightens the tip of the finger (the extensor tendon) is damaged and is no longer attached to the end (distal) bone of the finger. This type of injury can stop you from being able to straighten the tip of your finger.



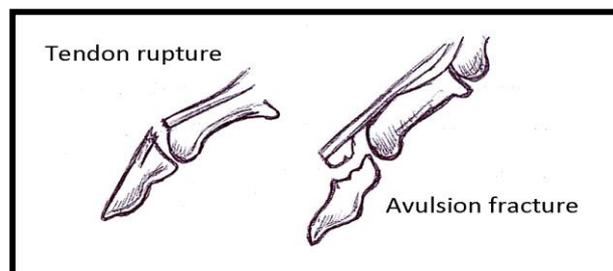
## What are the signs and symptoms?

You may not be able to straighten the end joint of your finger without help.

## Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

You may require an x-ray of the finger in order to confirm if the bone has broken as well as the tendon being damaged.

A mallet finger injury happens when a trauma to your finger either tears the fibres of the extensor tendon (a tendinous injury) or fractures the bone at the point where the tendon connects to the end of the bone (avulsion injury).



## What treatments are available?

Treatment aims to restore the ability to straighten the fingertip. By keeping the tip joint of the finger completely still for a period of time in a splint, the injury can heal.

## What would happen if I did not treat it?

If you do not get treatment for a mallet injury, the end joint of the finger will remain dropped and unable to straighten. It will not heal on its own. There is also a chance that the middle joint may be affected.

## How do I manage my mallet finger injury?

**Splint:** A splint has been made for you to hold the end joint of your finger straight.

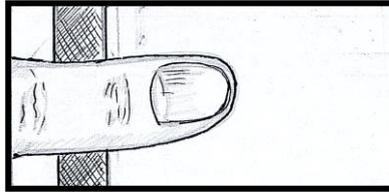
- The finger will need to stay in the splint at all times for the next \_\_\_\_\_ weeks in order for the tendon to start healing.
- If the splint does not fit, please contact your hand therapist as soon as possible.
- Do not try to alter the splint yourself.
- You must keep the splint dry at all times. Your hand therapist can suggest techniques for keeping it dry.
- For hygiene reasons, the splint needs to be changed every five to seven days. If your finger and splint get wet, change the splint as soon as possible.

Bending the end joint of your finger before recommended can result in the tendon being reinjured. This means that you will have to start the splinting treatment again.

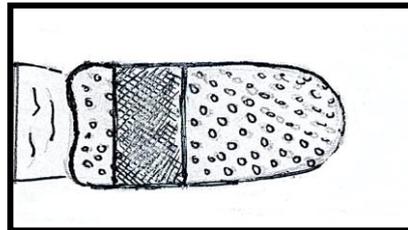
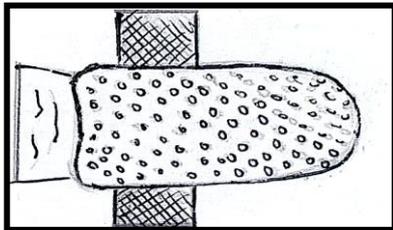
## How do I change the splint at home?

It is easier to re-apply the splint with the help of someone else. This reduces the risk of bending (and re-injuring) your finger.

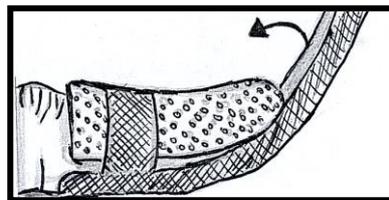
1. Cut five to six pieces of Leukotape (provided by the hand therapy department), attaching four to the side of the table and placing the fifth on the table, sticky side up.
2. Remove the current tape and splint – cut along the side of the splint. Keep the pad of your finger in contact with the table as you carefully remove the splint.  
**Do not let the tip of the finger bend.**
3. Remove all the tape from the splint and clean both sides with a wet wipe. It is best to ask another person to do this.
4. Clean the top of the finger with a wet wipe. Carefully, holding the tip joint straight, lift the finger off the table to clean underneath.
5. Place your finger down on the tape just below the crease of your middle joint.



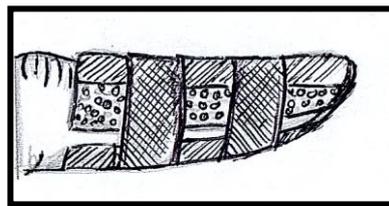
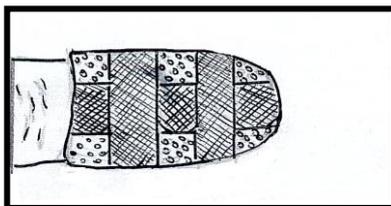
6. Place the splint over the top of the finger and secure the tape.



7. Keeping the tip of your fingers supported, secure a longitudinal piece of tape underneath the finger and pull it over the tip to attach it to the back of the splint. Repeat this step again.



8. Finally, place another strip of tape around the finger and splint, just past the middle joint. Then place the final tape over where the nail is so that there is a band of tape above and below your injured tip joint.



- ! **Make sure the tape does not restrict you bending the middle joint of your finger.**
- ! **Make sure the tape is not too tight – your fingertip will change colour (go dark), feel painful or have pins and needles if the tape is too tight. Remove and reapply if this is the case**
- ! **If you are having difficulty changing your splint at home, please book an earlier appointment with your hand therapist.**

## Exercises

It is important that the unaffected joints do not get stiff (especially the middle joint of the finger).

1. Straighten all your fingers as much as you can.
2. With your palm facing up, gently bend your fingers into the palm. You should bend only the middle joints. Do not try to bend the end joint of your injured finger.

## How long will it take to heal?

Depending on the type of injury you have had, you will need to use the splint full time for the next six to eight weeks and in some cases the splint may need to be worn for longer.

After which your therapist will assess your finger to determine if the tendon is healed enough to commence gentle movement out of the splint. You will still need to use your splint for a period of time to protect the tendon from further damage or injury; your therapist will advise you on how to do this.

Most mallet finger injuries heal without any problems, but it may take several months to regain full movement and function in the finger. Redness, swelling and tenderness of the skin around the tip joint of the finger are common for at least three to four months post injury, however this discomfort should settle with time.

Longer term, you may find that your finger **does not** completely straighten or you may be left with a small bump on the back of the tip joint of your finger. This is a normal outcome for this type of injury and should not affect the function of your finger in the longer term.

## Contact us

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this leaflet, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment.

For more urgent queries the team can be contacted on the **treatment enquiries** phone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is \_\_\_\_\_

**Treatment enquiries:** 020 8725 1038 (answer phone only)

**Appointments:** 020 8725 0007

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

Or scan  
here



## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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