

Mallet Injuries in Children

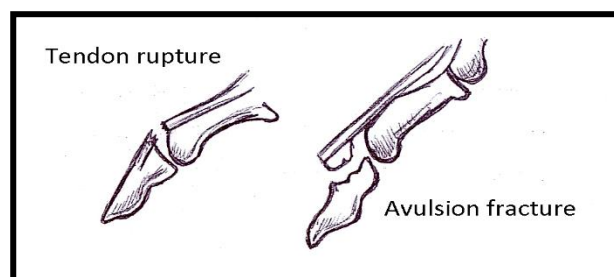
Information for patients, parents and carers

This leaflet explains about mallet injuries in children. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your child's care.

What is a mallet injury?

Mallet injuries are common injuries to the tip of a finger or thumb, where the tendon that straightens the end of the finger / thumb gets damaged and can no longer work to straighten that joint normally.

The tendon itself can either be a soft tissue injury where it breaks near its attachment point or can pull a small piece of bone away from the attachment point. This is called an avulsion fracture and would be visible on an x-ray.



Treatment

Nearly all mallet injuries will heal well if the affected joint is protected in a splint for up to six weeks.

You / your child will be made a splint to wear to protect the finger / thumb in the correct position, which will be secured in place with tape. This tape will need to be removed and replaced at home about every five to seven days by an adult, to allow the patient's / child's skin to be checked and cleaned and to keep the splint securely positioned. Please make sure you tell the team of any allergies to any kind of plasters or tape and contact us if any itching or redness develops around the splint or tape.

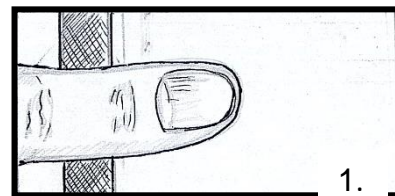
Your **splint must be worn at all times** and the **injured joint must not bend** at all during the six weeks as this can undo any healing that has occurred so far. If this happens, the six week splinting period must start again to ensure the injured finger or thumb can heal properly. Please inform your hand therapist straight away if your splint comes off or if you bend the injured joint by accident. You must also **remember not to get your splint wet** as this can affect the skin underneath and become very sore.

You will be provided with a roll of zinc oxide tape and some lining tape so that you can look after the splint at home. Changing the tape on the splint should always be performed by an adult, following the process on the next page.

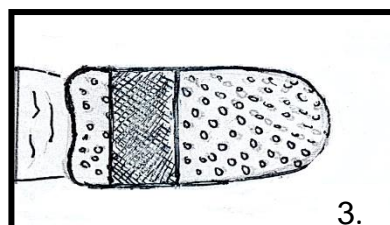
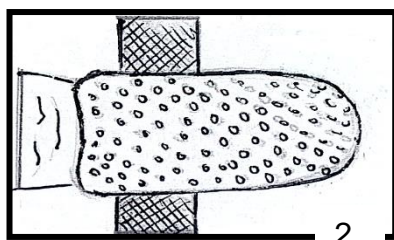
How to safely change the tape on your child's splint

1. Before removing the splint, cut four lengths of zinc oxide tape (provided by the hand therapy department), all approximately double the length of your child's splint and attach them to the edge of the table. Also cut a piece of the lining tape, large enough to cover the inside of the splint but do not remove the lining paper until you are ready to place it on the splint.
2. Carefully cut through the existing tape with a pair of small scissors, taking care not to contact your child's skin. You must make sure you maintain the straight position of your child's finger with your own hand once it is no longer supported by the tape, then place their hand flat on a table.
3. Use skin wipes to clean your child's finger (without lifting it up) and to wipe the splint once you have removed all the old tape. Once the splint is dry, re-line the inside with the new piece of lining tape.

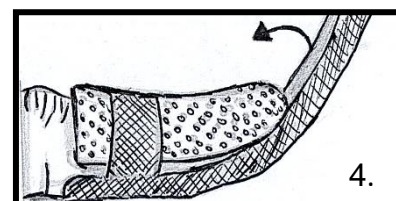
4. Place the first piece of tape, sticky side up on the table. Firmly but gently lift your child's finger, without letting it bend and place it onto the tape just below the crease of the middle joint (image 1).



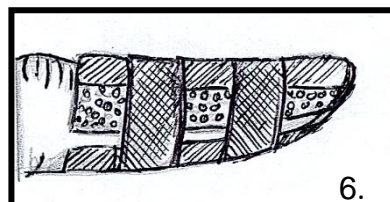
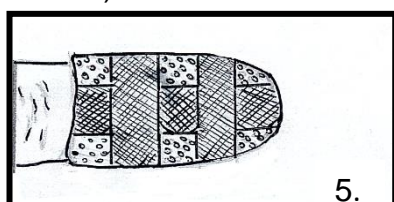
5. Place the splint on the top of the finger and secure the tape (images 2 and 3).



6. Place a second piece of tape, sticky side up, on the table. Again lifting the tip of the finger, secure a length-ways piece of tape from the middle joint and lift the fingertip up into the splint and the tape secured to the back of the splint (image 4). Repeat this step again.



7. Finally, place a second horizontal strip of tape just below the first to secure it in place (images 5 and 6).



8. The splint should feel comfortable and secure but not too tight. The hand therapist will show you how to check the blood supply to the end of your child's finger by pressing the skin at the tip so it goes white and watching to see that it returns to pink within two seconds. Your child should be able to bend the middle joint of the finger freely, with only the end joint held still.

What happens next?

If needed, you will see the hand therapist between one and two weeks after your initial appointment, to check in on how you / your child are managing. If you experience difficulties managing the splint at home, you can be seen weekly in the Dragon Centre to clean the finger / thumb and replace the tape. Please talk to your hand therapist if you have any concerns.

After six weeks you will be seen by the hand therapist, who will assess your finger / thumb to see if it has healed enough to start reducing the amount of time spent wearing your splint. You can expect to stop wearing the splint after another two to four weeks and can aim to return to sports after another four weeks.

Remember

- Do not remove the splint unless you are doing a tape change.
- Do not bend the injured joint or let the tip 'drop' down.
- Do not get the splint wet.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your / your child's treatment or splint, please contact the hand therapy department on 020 8725 1038 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm).

Your therapist's name is: _____

Or scan
here



For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: 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). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: HAN_PMI_05 **Published:** July 2025 **Review date:** July 2027