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## Discharge advice following a mallet finger injury



Issued by the Orthopaedics Department

## What is a mallet finger injury?

You have snapped the tendon that normally straightens the end joint of the finger. The tendon may even pull off a small piece of bone. This causes the tip of the finger to lie in a bent position and you are unable to straighten it.

## What happens next?

An orthopaedic trauma consultant (a doctor who specialises in fractures) will review your x-rays. If any other treatment is needed, or if we need to see you for review in the fracture clinic you will be contacted by phone or letter in the next five working days. If nothing further is required we will not contact you, however if you have any concerns please call the helpline number in this booklet.

## Wearing your finger splint

A splint will be applied and should be worn at all times, even at night, to keep the tip of your finger straight for eight weeks. During this time it is important to keep the tip of your finger straight. After the first eight weeks you must wear the splint at night for one month.

## Keeping the finger clean

Try to limit washing your finger to reduce the chance of it bending. Initially aim for cleaning your finger twice a week.

You must keep your finger straight even when taking the splint off to wash. This can be done by placing your hand flat on a table, removing the splint and cleaning the finger. Replace the splint without bending your finger.

Keep your finger and splint dry to avoid skin irritation.

## Returning to regular activities

Most injuries heal without any problems, but it may take several months before you can do everything you could before the injury.

When you have finished with the splint, it is important to gently move your finger, and slowly start doing the things you would normally do, so long as it is not painful. This will help improve any stiffness and help you to safely get back to normal. If your finger remains stiff after four months please contact the helpline.

Your finger joint may be red, swollen and slightly painful for a few months afterwards.

You may be left, permanently, with a small bump or be unable to straighten your finger fully. However this will not affect the function of your finger.

Occasionally, even after three months of splint treatment, the tendon may fail to heal. If this happens your finger may function well despite having a droop at the end joint. Surgical fusion of the end joint may be considered.

We wish you a speedy recovery.

If you have any worries or concerns, please contact us on the helpline:

**Monday - Friday, 9am - 3:30pm 01670 529431**

**After hours and weekends, if you need urgent advice contact:**

**Wansbeck General Hospital 01670 529884**

**North Tyneside Hospital 0191 2932515**

**Northumbria Specialist  
Emergency Care Hospital 0191 6072100**

## Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## Other sources of information

### NHS 111

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: **01670 511098**

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

PIN 673/V3

Review date: November 2020

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