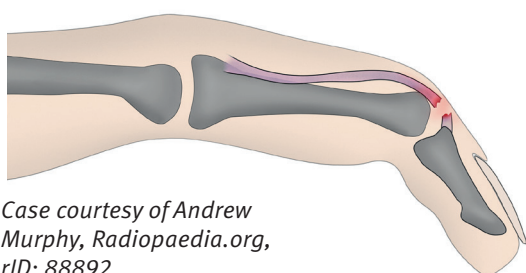


# Mallet Finger

Your Emergency Department doctor has referred you to the Virtual Fracture Clinic. This allows fast access to a specialist opinion without having to visit the hospital in person.

An orthopaedic doctor will review your case, then a physiotherapist will contact you by telephone to discuss your management plan.

## Your diagnosis is mallet finger



You have snapped the tendon that normally straightens the end joint of the finger. This causes the tip of the finger to lie in a bent position and you are unable to straighten it.

The mallet injury may also refer to where you have pulled little piece of bone off with the tendon, which is referred to as a 'bony mallet.'



## Treatment

We will put a splint on your finger. You should wear this continuously, even at night, to keep the finger straight for eight weeks (six weeks for bony mallets).

During this time, it is important to keep the finger straight, even when taking the splint off to wash. You can do this by placing your hand flat on a table, removing the splint and cleaning the finger. Replace the splint without bending your finger.

Try to limit washing the finger as much as possible to reduce the chance of the finger bending. Initially aim for not removing the splint at all for the first week, then cleaning the finger twice a week.

It is important to keep the finger and splint dry to avoid skin irritation.

At the end of this time, you will need to wear the splint for the next two weeks at night and whenever the finger might be at risk of injury.

We will refer you to a physiotherapist for exercises at an appropriate stage.

## Things to remember

Wear the splint for 8 weeks continuously (six weeks for a bony mallet).

Lifting restrictions for **6 to 8 weeks** – maximum 250 grams.

## Early Management: the first three days after the injury

It is normal for your finger to become bruised and swollen. This will settle over a few weeks. The following guidelines can help to minimise swelling and pain:

### Rest

For the first few days and avoid any activity that increases your pain.

### Ice

Ice the finger for **20 minutes every 1-2 hours**. Use an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in wet tea-towel. Continue this for **3 to 7 days** after your injury.

### Elevate

Rest hand above elbow position for first one to two weeks to minimise swelling in finger.

### Lifting

For the first **6 weeks** you should not lift objects heavier than a cup of tea or mobile phone (**250 grams**).

## Physiotherapy

If you are struggling to get your movement back at 12 weeks, please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic on 0448 193 644 to discuss your options.

## Expected return to daily activities

Most of these injuries heal without any problems, however, it may take several months for you to regain the full function of your finger.

## Driving

Check with your insurer about driving with a finger splint.

## Return to work

The amount of time you will need off work relates to the severity of your injury and your work requirements.

Discuss your return to work plan with your local doctor and employer.

As a guide:

- Manual workers - If you need to climb ladders or do repetitive lifting it may take **6 to 8 weeks** to return to normal duties.
- Desk workers - you can return as soon as your pain allows.

## Return to sport

It is recommended that you see a physiotherapist for a guided return to sport program.

## Longer-term recovery and expectations

After you have stopped using the splint (around 10 weeks), it is important to keep gently moving the finger and gradually resume daily activities within the limits of discomfort. This will help improve any stiffness and ensure the safest return to normal function. If you are struggling to get the movement back, please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic on 0448 193 644.

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

You may be left with a small bump or be unable to straighten the finger fully. If this happens, it is unfortunately a permanent feature, but it will not affect the function of your finger.

Occasionally, even after three months of treatment with a splint, the tendon may fail to heal. Most fingers function well despite a droop at the end joint. However, your consultant may consider whether you should have a surgical procedure known as fusion of the end joint.

## When to contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic

- If you have not heard from us within three working days after your Emergency Department visit.
- If your pain is so bad that medication and RICE (rest, ice, compression and elevation) do not help.
- If you notice increasing pain without a cause after it was improving.
- If you notice major numbness, pins and needles, or changes in circulation in your arm, hand or fingers.
- If your symptoms are still bad after 6 weeks.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic:**

**T: 0448 193 644**

**E: [myfracture@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:myfracture@health.qld.gov.au)**

This fact sheet provides some information to assist with management and rehabilitation of your injury. While it contains the recommended information, it does not contain all available information about your injury and is not a substitute for specific advice from the Virtual Fracture Clinic in respect of your injury.

All treatment options have risks and benefits. This advice is of a general nature and is appropriate for most patients with this condition. However, it may not apply to your specific injury and circumstances.

If you have any concerns about progress of your rehabilitation, contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic promptly.

Do not continue the exercises in the brochure if:

- You experience increasing pain that does not settle quickly with rest (some discomfort is common)
- Your condition has deteriorated in any way since you last consulted the Virtual Fracture Clinic
- You have a new injury or condition and have not consulted the Virtual Fracture Clinic about it.

This information is only designed for patients who are currently being treated by the Virtual Fracture Clinic at the Townsville University Hospital. If you do not understand the information seek clarification from the Virtual Fracture Clinic.

Patients should be aware that the suggested management is not guaranteed to provide any improvement in your condition.

Keep this brochure as you may need to read it again. Thank you to the Royal Melbourne Hospital VFC for their assistance.



Partnering with Consumers - This patient information brochure supports National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard 2. Consumers and/or carers provided feedback on this patient information.



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