

# Patient Information - Mallet Finger

## **Mallet Finger**

### **Patient information leaflet**

### **Emergency Department**

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### **What is Mallet finger?**

Mallet finger is an injury to the end of the finger, causing the tip to bend. 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.

## **Causes**

It is a common sports injury, but can also happen if the finger gets caught against something - for example, if a straight finger is stubbed and forced to bend suddenly at the joint, near the fingertip.

## **Treatment**

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.

Treatment aims to restore the ability to straighten the tip of the finger. By keeping the tip joint still for a period of time in a splint, the injured tendon (and bone, if needed) can heal.

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.

## Treatment in hospital

A doctor or nurse will put the finger in a splint, securing it with tape. You'll still be able to bend your finger at the middle joint.

You'll need to:

- Keep the splinted finger dry - the skin inside the splint can be sore if it gets wet
- Wear the splint for up to 8 weeks, only removing it to clean your finger and the splint

If the injury does not heal, you may need to wear the splint again for another 8 weeks. Rarely, you may need surgery.

## Management of the Splint

It's important to wash both your finger and the splint at least once a day, following these instructions:

1. Keep your finger flat on the table, cut the strapping, and slide the splint off your finger.
2. Wash and dry your finger and the splint using soap and water. Keep the end joint straight at all times by keeping your finger flat on the table. It may be easier if someone helps you to do this each day, as any movement of the end of your finger will delay the healing of the tendon, and may even cause permanent damage.
3. Slide the splint back over the fingertip, keeping your finger straight.
4. Replace the strapping - this should cover the middle of the splint, but should not cover the middle joint of the finger.

## Discharge advice

Depending on your job, you may need to take some time off work. You should also avoid sports involving the hands while your injury is healing. It may take several months for your finger to become fully functional. Simple, over the counter pain killers will help to reduce swelling and pain.

Redness, swelling and tenderness of the skin around the end of the finger are common for 3 to 4 months after injury but usually settle eventually.

You may be left with a small bump on the top of the joint and be unable to fully straighten the joint. Your finger may not be exactly the same as it was before the injury, but overall it should function well.

**DO:**

- Keep your hand elevated, exercising all the joints except for the end joint of the splinted finger.
- Check your skin regularly to monitor for any sores developing under the splint.

**DO NOT:**

- Do not wear any rings on this hand until the injured finger has healed. All rings should be removed at the time of injury to avoid swelling and circulatory problems.
- Do not miss any appointments with the specialist if these have been requested.

Please contact your GP if your condition is not improving, or if your pain relief is not adequate.

## Further Support

For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the NHS 111 service, walk-incentres, or your GP.

NHS website provides online health information and guidance at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**This leaflet has been developed in partnership with the Patient Information Group and our DGT Patient Partners**

## Patient Information

Further patient leaflets are available from the Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust website: <https://www.dgt.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets> Please ask a member of staff if you require information in another language or format.

## Complaints, Comments, Concerns and Compliments

Please speak to the staff in the ward or department caring for you if you have any concerns or questions relating to your care or that of a loved one.

Compliments can be shared by visiting: <https://www.dgt.nhs.uk/contact-us/compliments>

Alternatively, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01322 428382 Email: [dgn-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:dgn-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

## **Patient Property**

Please do not bring large sums of money or valuable items into the hospital. Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property unless it is handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust operate smoke-free hospitals. This means that smoking is not permitted anywhere on hospital grounds. For help to quit smoking please visit [www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/one-you-smokefree/](http://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/one-you-smokefree/)

Use of alcohol or illicit drugs is not permitted anywhere on the hospital site. For drug and alcohol support please speak to your nurse or doctor or

Visit: [www.changegrowlive.org/westkent/help](http://www.changegrowlive.org/westkent/help)

Call: 0330 128 1113

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