

MALLET FINGER

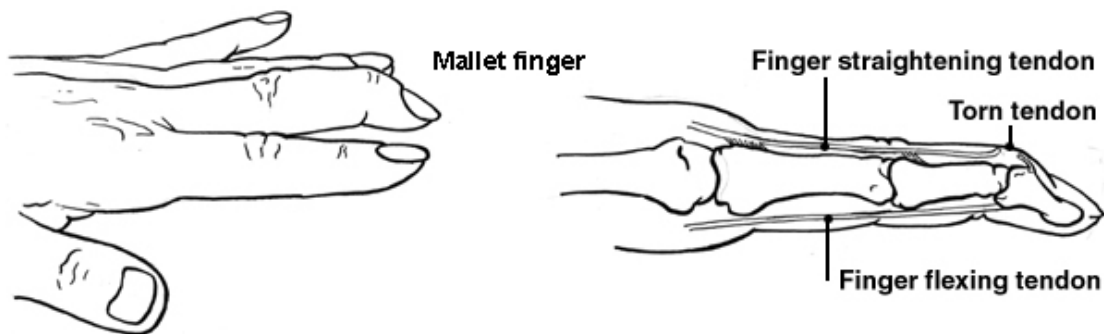
PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

What is a mallet finger?

A mallet finger is where the end of a finger is bent (flexed) towards the palm and cannot straighten.

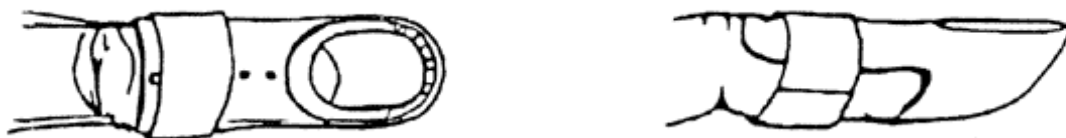
What causes a mallet finger?

The usual cause is an injury to the end of the finger. The injury tears the tendon that straightens (extends) the end of the finger. Less often, the cause is a fracture at the bottom of the bone where the tendon attaches. To look for a fracture an x-ray is taken of your injured finger. If there is a large piece of bone pulled away it may mean that an operation is advised.



What is the treatment for mallet finger?

More commonly only the tendon is injured or the fracture fragment is very small. An operation to repair the injury is then not possible. Instead the joint must be held straight in a splint for about 6 weeks to help the tendon to heal. The splint keeps the injured joint straight but allows the finger joints below it to move to stop them stiffening up.



Even with splinting there is a chance that your finger will not be as straight as before but keeping it in the splint gives it the best chance possible. It's tempting to test how well your finger is healing by taking the splint off or bending the tip of your finger, this can cause further damage or delay healing.

Cleaning

The splint needs to be taken off to clean your finger and the splint. If not, it will start to smell. When you take off the splint, your finger tip must be supported on a flat surface or the pad of your thumb. Ask the doctor or nurse to show you how to do this as it's important to get it right each time. Healing may be delayed or may not occur at all if the finger is allowed to bend.



You will be offered an appointment about one week after the injury. This is to check that the splint still fits as any swelling settles and also that you are managing to keep the splint clean. A final review is needed after 6 weeks of splinting to see if the tendon has healed.

Summary

Please DO NOT

- Try to test for healing by bending the finger tip.
- Wear any rings on this hand until the injured finger has healed. This will help avoid swelling and problems with the blood supply to the finger.

DO,

- Keep your hand elevated if there is swelling and exercise all the joints except the splinted joint.
- Keep your clinic appointment or phone to rearrange if you cannot make your given appointment.

Useful websites

www.nhs.uk

www.chsft.nhs.uk

Contact details

This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not yet be reflected in the guidance and you should discuss this with the clinical staff at the time of your appointment.

Information is based on that available on www.patient.co.uk.

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