

Mallet Finger

What is it?

A mallet finger is when the end joint of the finger will not straighten by itself. It can often be pushed straight, but will not hold that position on its own. It is caused by an injury to the 'extensor' tendon that straightens the end of the finger (tendons attach muscle to bone). The injury can either occur to the tendon or sometimes the tendon pulls away with a small piece of bone (called an 'avulsion').

How is it treated?

This injury is usually easily treated, but requires time and patience.

- A thermoplastic splint is fitted by your therapist preventing you from bending the tip of the finger.
- The splint is worn **24 hours per day for 6-8 weeks**, depending on the type of injury.
- After 6-8 weeks your therapist will instruct you how to decrease the amount of time spent wearing your splint. This may include continuing to wear the splint 24 hours per day but removing to start gentle exercises or only wearing the splint at night.
- Your finger may not be completely straight after this injury. There can be a slight bend (lag) at the end, no matter how careful you are.
- After the splinting period, your therapist will assist you with exercises to gradually encourage your finger to bend.

Splint and Skin Care

- Can I remove the splint?
 - The only time you can remove your splint is for skin care. The finger must remain straight during this period.
- Removing for skin care
 - Your therapist will demonstrate how to safely remove your splint for hygiene. You may need someone to help you.
 - Remove the splint, keeping your finger supported and making sure the tip does not bend. **Always use your other hand to hold it straight, or rest it on a flat surface.**
 - Use a moist towel to clean the finger, then dry it thoroughly.
 - Wash and dry the splint with soap and cool water.
 - Put the splint back on as advised by your therapist.

Precautions

1. Do not remove your splint for a shower - wear a plastic bag over the splint to avoid getting the finger wet.
2. Avoid activities which have a risk of falling (eg cycling, rollerblading). If in doubt check with your doctor or therapist.
3. Do not attempt to do more than the recommended exercises
4. Remember to keep your shoulder and elbow & all unaffected joints moving.

Exercises

It is very important that you maintain the movement of all the other joints of your hand. Complete 10 repetitions, four times a day of these exercises:

- Holding the other fingers straight, bend the joint just where the splint ends.



- Use your other hand to curl the adjacent fingers all the way into the palm.



This information is intended as a general guide only.

Please ask your therapist if you have any further questions.

Therapist: _____ Phone: 07 3646 7100