

Mallet Finger Injury

In a nutshell...

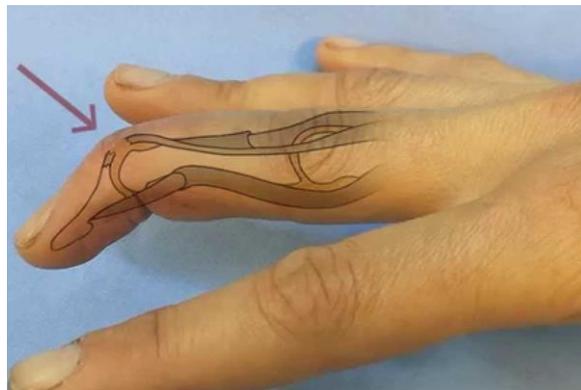


What is it?

A mallet finger is when the last joint at the end of the finger loses the capacity to be pulled up into a straight position. This happens when the tendon along the back of the finger is snapped or pulled away from the bone, and it results in the fingertip resting in a bent position (mallet deformity).

How did it get injured?

Mallet finger injuries often happen during normal, trivial activities – for example, striking the fingertip against the wall while plugging a cord into a socket. It is also a common injury during ball sports. There will always be some sort of force or impact pushing the last finger joint down into a bent position.



Is it going to get better?

If left untreated a mallet finger will never heal, and the deformity will be permanent. If treated with careful splinting a good outcome is usually possible. In rare cases, surgery is needed to achieve a good result.

How long will it take to heal?

45% of mallet injuries involve a small fracture from the last bone in the finger. Because bone heals so well, 6 weeks of splinting is usually enough in these cases. The remaining 55% of injuries involve damage to the tendon and splinting may be needed for 7-8 weeks or longer.

How much can I move my finger?

It is extremely important that your fingertip is held in a completely straight position for the entire splinting period – ask your physio for advice on how to achieve this while still washing and drying your fingertip! It is safe to move the rest of your finger while the splint is on.

When you do start removing the splint and doing exercises you will need to be very gentle and careful at first. Follow the instructions from your surgeon or physio very closely. Most people make a full recovery from a mallet injury, but it is also considered normal to have a persistent, slight droop at the last finger joint.

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