

Mallet Finger (page 1 of 3)

What is a mallet finger?



Mallet Finger Injury

A 'mallet finger' occurs as the result of an injury to the fingertip which leaves it with a droop. It will not be possible to straighten the end of the finger because there is damage to either the tendon or the bone where the tendon is attached.

How is it treated?

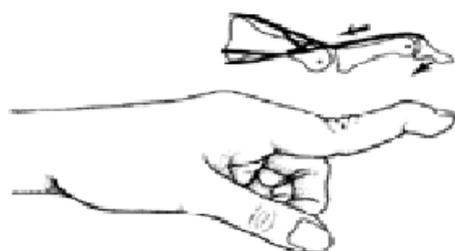
These injuries are treated using a small splint which keeps the joint near the fingertip straight.

The splint is small and made for you from a plastic material that is softened in hot water and moulded to your finger. The splint is secured to your hand using a non elastic adhesive tape. The other finger joints will be free to move.



To get the best result you must wear the splint 24 hours a day, without interruption, for about eight weeks. If you do not follow this advice your fingertip will droop.

You may not have full movement in this joint by the end of your treatment. But we hope you will be able to hold the fingertip straight without it drooping.



If a mallet finger is left untreated there may be other complications such as a Swan Neck Deformity which occurs as a result of the change in balance of the tendons across the three bones in the finger.

What do I do with the splint?

- you must wear your splint at all times
- for the first two weeks after your injury it is very important that you keep your hand up above your heart to help reduce any swelling

Plastic Outpatient Therapy Department
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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

- it is important that you do not stick your finger out but let it rest in line with the other fingers when you are not using your hand
- you need to maintain the movement in the first joint in your finger and fully bend it on a regular basis
- you must keep your finger and splint dry. If your finger becomes wet, your skin will turn white, become wrinkled and the skin may become sore
- you need to check that the splint fits well and that the tape does not become loose. The whole of the back of the tip of your finger should be touching the splint. If either end of the splint is loose and you can see a gap, it is likely that the tape is too loose, you need to apply additional tape if you have not been shown how to remove your splint
- you will be taught how to remove and replace your splint but do not remove your splint at all until you have been shown how to do so
- if you find that your splint is not fitting or the fingertip is not being kept straight you must contact the Therapists for the splint to be changed.



What do I do if my finger becomes painful?

Your finger may become painful if:

- it becomes swollen
- your splint or tape is too tight.

If your finger becomes swollen you should keep your hand above your heart. If the pain continues you should contact the Therapists in the Plastic Outpatient Department or Odstock ward at night or the weekend.

How to remove and replace your splint

You may be shown how to remove your splint so that you can dry your finger or check your skin. It will be better if you can have help to do this.

- your finger must remain straight when your splint is off
- your fingertip must be supported all of the time. If the joint bends the healing tissues may be damaged which will cause the droop to remain. This will mean that you will need to wear a splint for longer or have a more droopy fingertip in the long term.

Make sure that you have everything ready before you begin:

You will need:

- New tape cut to the right length
- New self adhesive lining for your splint
- Towel to dry your finger
- Small pair of scissors

Hair dryer if your finger has become wet.

- with your fingertip supported on the table, cut the tape along one of the sides of the splint and around the fingertip
- gently lift the splint off your finger
- lift the finger off the table by its tip and get someone else to peel the tape off the underside of your finger
- place your finger on the towel and dry the exposed side of your finger with the hairdryer on a low heat, if required.

You must make sure that your fingertip is always supported straight and does not bend.

- you can wash the splint in warm water if you need to, it will need a new lining afterwards
- secure the splint back on your finger with new tape making sure that the back of your finger is in contact with the splint all along its length. You should not be able to see your finger or finger nail move away from the splint when you bend your finger.

Attending the hospital for therapy support

You will need to come to the hospital to see a Therapist for your finger to be checked. How often you need to attend will depend on how your finger is reacting to the injury and to ensure that the splint is fitting properly. This level of support is necessary to help you to get the best result.

Can I work, play sport or drive?

You will be able to do most of your normal activities with your splint on including driving. You may be able to work with your splint on, this will depend on your job.

You should not do any sporting activities as this may cause your splint to come off and you will damage your finger again.

If you have any concerns please contact:

Plastic Outpatient Therapy Department on: 01722 345530 during normal working hours and Odstock Ward: 01722336262 ext. 3507 at other times.

