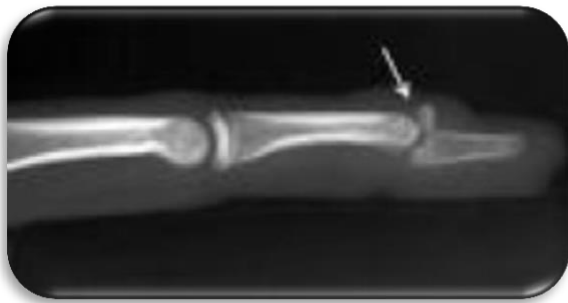


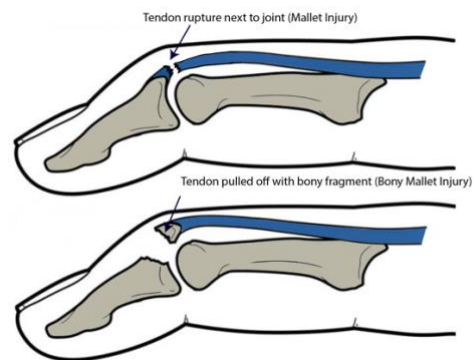
## What is a Mallet Injury?

Mallet finger is an injury to the thin tendon that straightens the end joint of a finger or thumb. This injury can happen to anyone when an unyielding object (like a ball) strikes the tip of a finger and forces it to bend further than it is intended to go. As a result, you are not able to straighten the tip of your finger on your own.

A Mallet injury can be tendinous or bony. A tendinous mallet is where the injury is to the tendon alone and a bony mallet where a bony fragment has been pulled away with the tendon.



Above is an x ray of a bony mallet injury



Tendinous injury at the top, bony injury underneath

## Treating mallet finger

Your finger will be put in a plastic splint, which keeps it straight, with the end joint slightly bent backwards. You'll still be able to bend your finger at the middle joint.

The splint is taped on and must be worn day and night for 6 to 8 weeks to allow the 2 ends of the torn tendon to stay together and heal. It should only be removed for cleaning.

It's very important that the end of your finger does not bend during the time it's splinted because it may slow the healing and reduce the effectiveness of the treatment.

The middle joint of the finger is left free so you can continue to move it to prevent any stiffness developing.

Surgery is only needed if you also have a large or displaced fragment of bone, if the skin is broken, or in rare cases where mallet finger fails to heal.

### How to keep your finger clean

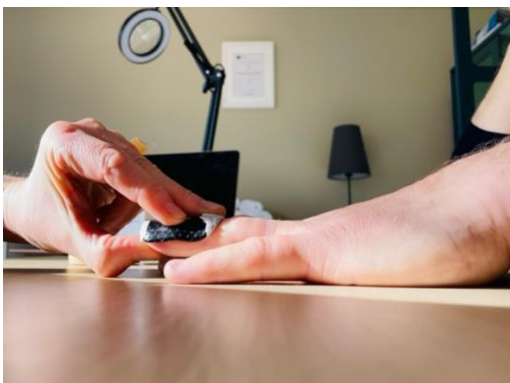
You must keep your splinted finger clean and dry at all times. If the skin inside the splint gets wet it will become very sore.

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

1. Keep your finger flat on a 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 your 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 your finger.



## **Recovery**

It should take 6 to 8 weeks for your finger to heal, after which time you'll be able to use it again. You may be advised to continue to only wear the splint at night for up to 4 more weeks.

In some cases, you may only need to see a specialist doctor once, as a hand physiotherapist may be able to take over your care. They'll give you exercises to do at home to help prevent your finger becoming stiff.

Depending on your job, you may need to take some time off work. You should also avoid contact sports while your injury is healing.

It may take several months for your finger to become fully functional. Redness, swelling and tenderness of the skin around the end of the finger are common for 3 or 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.