



TUAN A. TRAN M.D., M.B.A, F.A.C.S.

Diplomate American Board of Plastic Surgery, Diplomate American Board of Surgery

General Surgery, Reconstructive Surgery, Aesthetic Surgery, Plastic and Hand Surgery

Mallet Finger

Post-Operative Instructions

Overview

Mallet finger injury often occurs when a sudden force hits the tip of a straightened finger and forces the tip to bend. In most cases, such injury can cause the tendon to stretch or tear. In other cases, the tendon may pull a piece of bone away from the rest of the bone. This is known as an avulsion fracture.

What to Expect

The most common treatment for mallet finger is splinting. You will need to wear a splint to keep your fingertip straight at all time while your finger heals.

- If your tendon is only stretched, but not torn, it should heal in 4 to 6 weeks if you wear a splint fulltime. This means that it must be worn while bathing, then carefully changed afterwards.
- If your tendon is torn or pulled off the bone, it should heal in 6 to 9 weeks if you wear a splint fulltime as directed. Then your doctor may instruct you to wear your splint less frequently, such as at night only.

It is important to keep your finger straight at all time. If your fingertip drops at all, you will have to wear your splint for a longer period of time.

Home Care

- Always keep the splint dry and clean.
- Keep your finger straight the whole time the splint is off.
- Cover your finger and splint with a plastic bag while bathing or showering.
- Carefully clean and change the splint after bathing.
- You may apply an ice pack for 20 minutes every hour you are awake to reduce pain and swelling.
- Take pain medicine as directed by Dr. Tran. For mild to moderate pain, you may use over-the-counter pain reliefer like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn), or acetaminophen (Tylenol).



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Splinting

Refer to the demonstrations below for directions on changing your splint at home.



When removing the splint, your fingertip must stay extended to prevent any disruption to your healing.

1. Start with placing the injured finger on a flat surface, such as a tabletop.
2. Remove the surrounding tapes.
3. Carefully pull the splint off while transferring your fingertip onto the table surface.
4. Clean and dry the finger and splint as needed.



5. Slightly pull your finger to the edge of the counter to expose the first knuckle, while resting the fingertip straight on the counter.
6. Place the splint on the top side of the fingertip.
7. Secure the splint in place with two pieces of tape – wrap the first piece of tape around the knuckle, then wrap the second piece of tape around the tip of the finger without letting the tip droop or bend.

Make sure the splint is snugged to prevent the finger from moving, but not too tight that the blood supply is cut off. If your skin is white when you take off the splint, it may be too tight.

Activity

You will likely be able to resume normal activities or sport, as long as you wear your splint at all time. Ask your doctor should you have any concerns or questions.



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Follow-up Care

Your first follow-up visit will be within 7 days of the operation. Our staff will arrange for your visit at your pre-operative appointment or on the day of your first splint application.

Possible Problems/Emergency

If you develop any symptoms such as fevers with temperature greater than 101.5 F, chills, persistent nausea and vomiting, inability to urinate, persistent numbness/tingling of fingers, any increasing pain not controlled with medications, and if the splint feels tight and is squeezing your wrist/forearm, please contact our office at 714-839-8000 between the hours of 9AM-6PM on Monday-Thursday and 9AM-1PM on Friday; or you may reach us at 714-860-3588 after hour.

If you are unable to reach your surgeon or a member of his staff, go to the Emergency Room closest to you.

References:

Mount Sinai. (2020). *Mallet finger - aftercare*. Retrieved <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/selfcare-instructions/mallet-finger-aftercare#:~:text=If%20your%20tendon%20is%20only,4%20weeks%2C%20at%20night%20only>.

OrthoInfo. (2020). *Diseases & conditions: Mallet finger (Baseball finger)*. Retrieved from <https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/mallet-finger-baseball-finger/>