Mallet finger

You have a mallet finger, which means that the tip of the finger lies in a bent position and you are unable to straighten it. You have snapped the tendon that normally straightens the end of the finger. The tendon may even have pulled off a small fragment of the bone.

Summary

- The tip of your finger lies in a bent position and you are unable to straighten it. This is called a mallet finger.
- This type of injury almost always heals well without any loss of function.
- A routine follow-up is not necessary for this type of injury.
- The mallet finger can occur with or without a fracture, make sure you follow the treatment schedule appropriate for your injury.
- **You must wear the splint continuously, 24 hours a day; nonstop.**
- At the 'Gipskamer' (plaster room) you will get a hand-therapy referral. You can make an appointment at the therapist after 6 weeks (bone fragment/fracture) or 8 weeks (tendon injury).
- You can find more information in our Virtual Fracture Care app in the App store (iPhone) or Google Store (Android).
- If you have any questions, or are experiencing problems with your recovery, you can call our 'Breuklijn' (fracture hotline) on workdays between 10.00-12.00.

Treatment

A mallet finger is a common injury, in most cases an operation is not necessary. You will be treated with a splint.

There are two ways to get the splint:

- You visit the Emergency Department during office hours. You will get a personalized splint at the 'Gipskamer' (plaster room) to keep the finger straight.
- You visit the Emergency Department outside office hours: you will get a temporary splint. You have to make an appointment to our 'Gipskamer' (plaster room) by calling +31 088 320 27 00. We strongly advise you to do so on the next workday. After you have made the appointment you can come to our 'Gipskamer' and a personalized splint will be made for you.

The treatment of a mallet finger with a loose bone fragment (fracture) is different from a mallet finger without a loose bone fragment (i.e. only tendon injury).

The doctor at the emergency department will inform you about your specific type of injury.

Treatment of a mallet finger with a fracture

0-6 weeks

- Continuously wear the splint. Do not take it off, at all.

6-8 weeks

- Start hand therapy (and start exercises when your therapist advises you to do so).
- Wear the splint during the night and when your finger is at risk of injury.

Treatment of a mallet finger without a fracture (tendon injury)

0-8 weeks

- Continuously wear the splint. Do not take it off, at all.

8-10 weeks

- Start hand therapy (and start exercises when your therapist advises you to do so).
- Wear the splint during the night and when your finger is at risk of injury.

Instructions

- You have to wear the splint at all times (24 hours a day). It is very important that you do not remove the splint. If you remove the splint before your hand-therapist advises you to do so, your recovery up to that point will be undone and the chance of a complete recovery will decrease
  - If you have a tendon injury, you have to wear the splint for 8 weeks.
  - If you have a tendon injury with a loose bone fragment, you have to wear the splint for 6 weeks.
- After these 6 weeks (bone fragment + tendon injury) or 8 weeks (isolated tendon injury), you have to wear the splint during the night for 2 more weeks. Sometimes your hand therapist advises you to wear the splint longer.
- In the course of these 2 weeks, also wear the splint during the day whenever your finger is at risk of injury.
- Your finger and the splint should not get wet, as this will cause irritation of the skin.
- Are you in pain? Use a mild pain killer such as paracetamol (acetaminophen). Do not wait with the use of paracetamol until the pain is too much.

Recovery

- At the 'Gipskamer' (plaster room) you will get a hand-therapy referral. You can make an appointment at the therapist after 6 weeks (bone fragment/fracture) or 8 weeks (tendon injury).
- The therapist will decide if you can start exercises and will give you instructions on how to use the finger during daily activities. Be careful to gradually resume daily activities and not make any sudden movements with your injured finger. This can damage the tendon.
- Most mallet injuries heal after 3 months.

When to contact us?

If you have any questions, please contact our 'Breuklijn' (fracture hotline) on workdays between 10.00-12.00.

We will make an appointment for you. Also contact our 'Breuklijn' when:

- Your pain increases.
- The tip of your finger bends again when you have started doing the exercises.
- The splint does not fit anymore.
- The splint needs to be cleaned.

Replace the splint

You should never replace the splint yourself. When the slint does not fit anymore contact the 'Breuklijn' (fracture hotline) on workdays between 10.00-12.00.

Exercises

It is important that you do not start exercises before the hand therapist advises you to do this. When you can start with exercises your hand therapist will give you specific exercises.

Virtual Fracture Care app

In our Virtual Fracture Care app, you can find more information about your injury. You can also find exercises here to improve your recovery. You can find the app in the Appstore (iPhone) and in the Google Store (Android). You can also scan the QR-code, automatically you will be transferred to the app.



Questions? Please call the 'Breuklijn'

If there are any questions after reading this information, please call our 'Breuklijn' (fracture hotline) on workdays between 10.00-12.00.

Gerelateerde informatie

Specialismen

- Spoedeisende Geneeskunde (https://www.antoniusziekenhuis.nl/spoedeisende-geneeskunde)
- Chirurgie (https://www.antoniusziekenhuis.nl/chirurgie)

Contact Spoedeisende Geneeskunde T 088 320 33 00