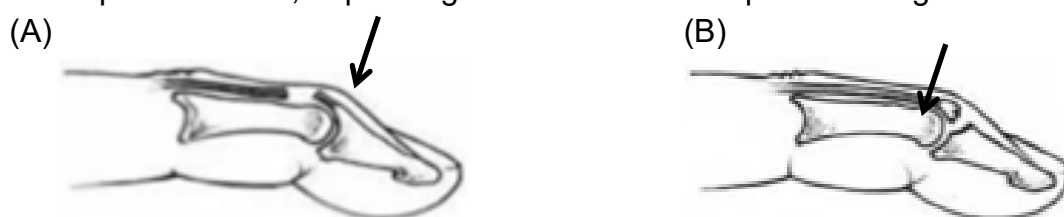




## Mallet finger injury: discharge advice

You have been diagnosed with a mallet finger injury. This leaflet explains what that is and how to best care for your finger while it heals.

- A mallet finger injury can be caused by a rupture of the tendon that straightens the finger (A).
- It can also occur when the tendon does not rupture but pulls a small piece of bone off the finger where the tendon is attached (B)
- The result is the same, as the tendon then cannot straighten the finger.
- A splint will be applied to keep the finger in a straight position at the end joint. Several types of splint are used, depending on the size and shape of the fingers.



- The splint is worn **continuously** for 8 weeks (A) or 6 weeks if a bony fragment (B), followed by a **further 2 weeks at night** (A and B).
- It is very important that the end joint does not bend during the splinted period.
- When you remove the splint to wash your finger, you must hold it straight on a flat surface and not allow it to bend.
- You will be shown how to change the splint safely.
- Severe mallet fractures sometimes require surgical treatment, especially if the fracture is large or has allowed the end joint to drop out of alignment.
- Most injuries treated by a splint will heal satisfactorily, leaving normal function.
- Mallet fractures may leave a small bump on the top of your finger and may result in some loss of movement in the joint.
- Redness, tenderness and swelling are common for 3 to 4 months, but will settle.
- Occasionally the tendon fails to heal; it can be treated by further splinting and possible surgical repair, although most fingers function well despite a droop at the end joint.

If the pain gets worse or lasts more than 6 weeks, or if you are concerned following discharge from hospital, please contact: Fracture Clinic on **0118 322 6567 (12 noon-5pm, Monday to Friday)** or mobile: **07554 330 369**.

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

RBFT Orthopaedic Unit, January 2024. Next review due: January 2026

# Hand injury exercises

## Remember:

- Only start exercising after the continuous period of wearing the splint has been completed (8 weeks for tendon rupture (A) or 6 weeks for small piece of bone (B)).
- Exercise as the pain allows – do not continue if it is too painful!
- Complete 10 of each exercise as appropriate.
- As the exercises become easier, build up to completing four times a day.
- Use the hand for light activities as much as possible to increase confidence before attempting anything heavy or sustained.

Supporting your injured hand on a table, do the following exercises:

## Hand

1. Curl your fingers into the palm to make a fist, then stretch the fingers out.
2. With the palm flat on the table, lift each finger up and down, one at a time.
3. With the palm flat on the table, spread your fingers wide apart and then close together.
4. With the palm down, raise the knuckles up while keeping the fingers straight – i.e. making a bridge.

## Thumb

1. Take your thumb across towards the base of your little finger, then out to the side and hold the position.
2. Place your palm upwards and move thumb up away from palm, stretching the thumb 'web'.
3. Circle your thumb around, in both directions.
4. Touch each finger with your thumb (on the same hand).
5. Squeeze a small sponge ball.

If your hand swells, sit with your hand and arm supported on a pillow above the level of your shoulder, at least twice a day for half an hour. Move your fingers as the same time. To overcome stiffness in your wrist, do the exercises.