This leaflet has been designed to explain the benefits of the treatment activity you have been taught, act as a reminder of technique and who to contact with any questions.
Introduction – Mallet Finger Injury

You have recently been seen by the Physiotherapist and taught techniques to help manage your condition. This leaflet is designed to remind you of the correct technique and any personalised advice given during the session.

What is a Mallet Finger Injury?

A Mallet finger injury is a tear of the tendon that straightens the end joint of the finger. It is often caused by catching the finger “end on” during sport, but it sometimes results from a minor injury such as catching the finger when tucking in bed sheets. The tear may occur where the tendon joins onto the end bone of the finger. Or when the tendon tears it may pull off a small fragment of bone at this point (in which case it is called a mallet fracture).

What are the Symptoms?

- Pain and swelling over the end of the finger
- The end of the finger lies in the bent position at rest
- The inability to hold the finger straight at the end joint

An X-ray should be taken to look for a fracture.

What is the Treatment?

Splintage Phase

A splint will be applied to keep the finger in a straight position at the end joint. Several types of splint are used, depending partly on the size and shape of the finger. The splint is worn continuously for six to eight weeks, although this will be advised by your Therapist.

It is very important that the end joint does not bend during the splintage treatment period. However, it is important to keep the middle finger joint below the splint moving, as in the diagram below.

Support below the joint being exercised. Bend the middle joint of your finger and then straighten it. Bend 10 times, 4-5 times a day.

If you have to remove the splint to wash the finger, you must hold it straight on a flat surface and not allow it to bend. To do this lay your hand palm down on a flat surface and slip the splint off. Wash the finger whilst the hand remains flat and then slide the splint back on. You will be shown how to do this safely by your Therapist.
Information for patients and visitors

Early Movement Phase
At the end of this time the splint is worn for up to 4 weeks at night and whenever the finger might be at risk of injury. Your Therapist will advise you of this.

Do not try to examine how much of your finger has healed by bending it – tempting thought it may be as it could cause further damage.

Risks of Not Following Advice Guidelines
If you do not comply with instructions given regarding the use of the splint and the length of time it should be worn, then it is likely that the ability to straighten the end of your finger will not return.

Severe mallet finger injuries sometimes require surgical treatment.

What is the outcome?
Most injuries treated by splintage will heal satisfactorily leaving normal function in the affected finger. There may be slight loss of full straightening at the completion of treatment, and it may take several months to regain satisfactory function. Redness, swelling and tenderness of the skin on top of the end joint are common for three to four months after injury, but will usually settle eventually.

Mallet finger injuries may leave a small bump on top of the end joint and slight loss of bending of the joint, but pain is rare and the finger generally functions well.

Contact Details for Further Information
Hand Therapy Team, Physiotherapy Department, Diana Princess of Wales Hospital
01472 875276
Hand Therapy Team, Physiotherapy Department, Scunthorpe General Hospital
01724 290010

Concerns and Queries
If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Reference Section
Information for patients and visitors

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