
Education

Mallet Finger (Baseball Finger)

What is mallet finger?

Mallet finger, also known as baseball finger, is an injury to the fingertip caused by a blow to the end of the finger. In mallet finger, the tendon that straightens the tip of the finger is injured and you may lose the ability to straighten your finger.

How does it occur?

There is usually a jamming injury to the tip of the finger.

What are the symptoms?

You may have pain and swelling at the tip of the finger. You may be unable to straighten the tip of your finger. If the injury is old or if you do not seek medical care soon enough, you may permanently lose the ability to straighten your finger.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will examine your finger and review your symptoms. An x-ray may be taken to see if there is also a fracture. Commonly, the tendon will pull off a piece of the bone to which it is attached at the end of your finger.

How is it treated?

Your finger will be straightened and placed in a splint for about 6 weeks to allow the tendon to reattach to the finger bone or, if a piece of bone has been pulled off, to allow the bone to heal. It is important to keep this splint on to permit healing. Because your finger probably will be swollen, you should apply ice packs to your finger for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for the first 2 or 3 days or until the pain goes away. Your hand should be elevated on a pillow when you are lying down or placed on the back of a chair or couch when you are sitting.

How long will the effects last?

It is important that you wear a splint for your mallet finger for at least 6 weeks after your injury. If you wear your splint as your health care provider has recommended you may return to your activities immediately. NOT wearing your splint can lead to permanent injury or deformity of your finger.

When can I return to my normal activities?

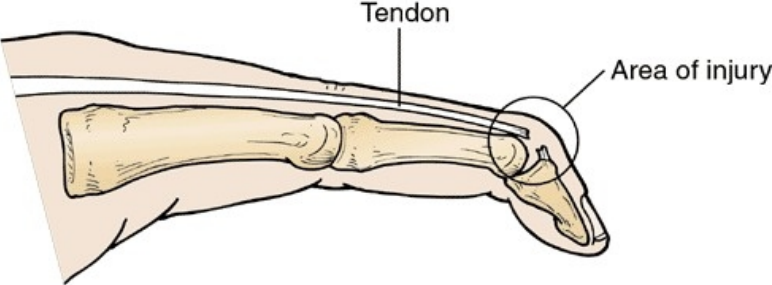
Everyone recovers from an injury at a different rate. Return to your activities will be determined by how soon your finger recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury has occurred. The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your normal activities as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury. Ask your health care provider when you should start rehabilitation exercises and when you can return to normal activities.

How can I prevent mallet finger?

Mallet finger is caused by a direct blow to the end of the finger during an accident that is usually not preventable.

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