



MALLET FINGER FAQ

1) What is a mallet finger?

It is a deformity caused by rupture of the tendon at the tip of the finger. This can also occur with a fracture.

2) What does a mallet finger look like?

It is a finger that is bent at the tip and one cannot make it straight.

3) Can it get worse if it goes untreated?

It can stay the same or get worse.

4) Does it need surgery?

If the finger is bleeding or has an open wound it should be treated immediately. If there is a fracture that is large or out of position it may need surgery. If there is no fracture, splinting the finger in a straight position may be all that is necessary but it must be properly evaluated by a hand surgeon to make sure there are no additional problems.

5) What type of doctor treats a mallet finger?

A hand surgeon, an orthopaedic, plastic or general surgeon that specializes in hand injuries, is most helpful. He or she may refer you to a hand therapist for splinting and monitoring the condition.

6) How long does the splint have to stay on?

Splinting must be continuous. That is, the splint must not be removed for washing, showering or any other activity. The splint must stay on full time for a minimum of eight weeks and an additional two weeks for protective activities. The splinting time may vary if there are additional complications.

7) Will the finger be stiff after the splinting period?

The finger will regain movement very gradually. It should not be forced because mallet deformity could reoccur. The hand surgeon may send you to a therapist to be instructed in proper care and exercises.

8) Will the finger look normal after the injury?

The tip of the finger may remain slightly thicker. There may also be a slight loss in movement, that is, it may not be fully straight or may not bend fully. Most mallet injuries recover full function.

9) Is there a lot of pain?

When the injury is to the tendon, there may be no pain. Some people do experience pain if there is a fracture. During the splinting process the pain is minimal. Once therapy or exercises begin, pain is also minimal. It is mostly a feeling of stiffness.