

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 doctor 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?

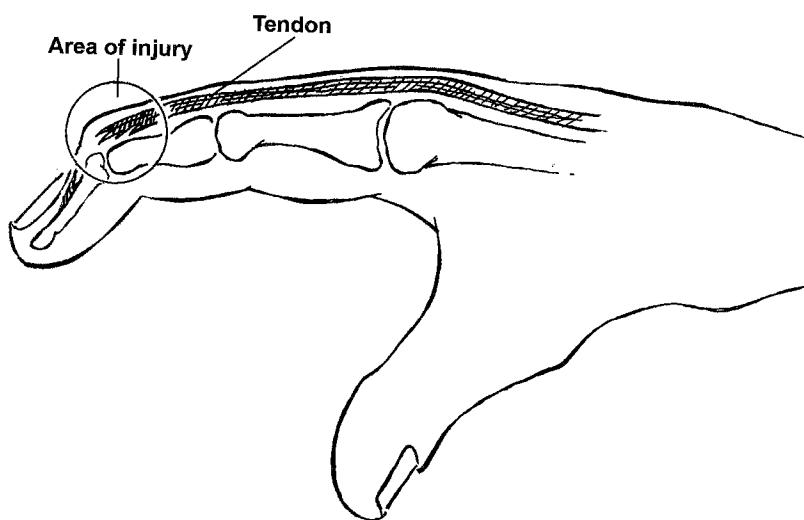
Your finger will be straightened and placed in a splint for about 6 weeks to allow the tendon to reattach to the finger bone or, if a piece of bone has been pulled off, to allow the bone to heal. It is important to keep this splint on to permit healing. Because your finger probably will be swollen, you 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.

When can I return to my sport or activity?

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to your sport or activity will be determined by how soon your finger recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred.

It is important that you wear a splint for your mallet finger for at least 6 weeks after your injury. If you wear your

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splint as your doctor has recommended you may return to your activities immediately. NOT wearing your splint can lead to permanent injury or deformity of your finger.

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.

Mallet Finger (Baseball Finger) Rehabilitation Exercises

You may do all of these exercises when your doctor says you can remove your splint.

1. Passive range of motion: Gently assist the injured joint by helping to bend it with your other hand. Gently try to straighten out the injured joint with your other hand. Repeat slowly, holding for 5 seconds at the end of each motion. Do this 10 times. Do these exercises 3 to 5 times per day.
2. Finger lift: With your palm flat on a table and your fingers straight, lift each finger up individually and hold 5 seconds. Then put it down and lift the one next to it until you have done all 5 fingers individually. Hold each one 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.
3. Fist making: Make your hand into a fist. If the injured finger will not bend into the fist, assist it with your uninjured hand and try to help it bend into the fist. Hold this position for 5 to 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times.
4. Object pick-up: Practice picking up small objects such as coins, marbles, pins, or buttons with the injured finger and the thumb.

