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Finger pain

Finger pain is pain in one or more fingers. Injuries and many medical conditions can cause finger pain.

Considerations

Nearly everyone has had finger pain at some time. You may have:

- Tenderness
- Burning
- Stiffness
- Numbness
- Tingling
- Coldness
- Swelling
- Change in skin color
- Redness

Many conditions, such as arthritis, can cause finger pain. Numbness or tingling in the fingers may be a sign of a problem with nerves or blood flow. Redness and swelling can be a sign of infection or inflammation.

Causes

Injuries are a common cause of finger pain. Your finger may become injured from:

- Playing contact sports such as football, baseball, or soccer
- Doing recreational activities such as skiing or tennis
- Using machinery at home or work
- Doing tasks at home, such as cooking, gardening, cleaning, or repairs
- Falling
- Getting into a fist fight or punching something
- Doing repetitive movements like typing

Injuries that can cause finger pain include:

- Smashed fingers, such as from a hammer blow or a car door that crushes the finger.
- Compartment syndrome, which is severe swelling and pressure in an area of muscles, nerves, and blood vessels. A crushing injury can cause this serious condition, which requires immediate medical attention.
- Mallet finger, when you can't straighten your finger. Sports injuries are a common cause.
- Finger strains, sprains, and bruises.
- Broken finger bones.
- Skier's thumb, an injury to the ligaments in your thumb, such as from a fall during skiing.
- Cuts and puncture wounds.
- Dislocation.

Certain conditions can also cause finger pain:

- Arthritis, the breakdown of cartilage in the joint that causes inflammation with pain, stiffness, and swelling.
- Carpal tunnel syndrome, pressure on the median nerve in the wrist, causing numbness and pain in the hand and fingers.
- Raynaud phenomenon, a condition that results in blocked blood flow to the fingers when it is cold.
- Trigger finger, when a swollen finger tendon makes it hard to straighten or bend your finger.
- Dupuytren contracture, which causes tissue in the palm of the hand to become tighter. This makes it hard to straighten the fingers. It usually affects the small or ring finger.
- De Quervain tenosynovitis, which causes pain in the tendons along the thumb side of the wrist, most often from overuse.
- Infections.
- Tumors.

Home Care

Often, care at home is enough to relieve finger pain. Start by avoiding activities that cause finger pain.

If finger pain is due to a minor injury:

- Remove any rings in case of swelling.
- Rest the finger joints so they can heal.
- Apply ice and elevate the finger.
- Use over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen (Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve) to reduce both pain and swelling.
- If needed, buddy tape the injured finger to the one next to it. This will help protect the injured finger as it heals. Don't tape it too tight, which can cut off circulation.
- If you have a lot of swelling or the swelling does not go away in a day or so, see your health care provider. Small fractures or tendon or ligament tears can occur, and can lead to problems in the future if not treated correctly.

If finger pain is due to a medical condition, follow your provider's instructions for self-care. For example, if you have Raynaud phenomenon, take steps to protect your hands from the cold.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your provider if:

- Your finger pain is caused by severe injury
- Your finger is deformed
- The problem continues after 1 week of home treatment
- You have numbness or tingling in your fingers
- You have severe pain at rest
- You can't straighten your fingers
- You have redness, swelling, or fever

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

The provider will do a physical exam, which will include looking at your hand and finger movement.

You will be asked questions about your medical history and symptoms.

You may have an x-ray of your fingers and hand.

Treatment depends on the cause of the problem.

Alternative Names

Pain - finger

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