

Fingertip injuries self-care

valid only during the UK Covid-19 pandemic of 2020

Introduction

Fingertip injuries are common in adults and children, as is easy and all too common for fingers to get trapped in either the hinge or the handle side of a door. This injury can cause immediate pain and distress. Up until now, we recommended seeking help as there may be an underlying fracture of the bone at the tip of your finger, with or without an injury to the tissue directly underneath your finger nail. This tissue helps your nail to grow and without proper medical treatment, there is a small risk of infection or abnormal nail growth.

However during this current Covid19 emergency situation, to keep you and your family safe we have to minimise visits to hospital wherever possible. The risk that coronavirus infection presents is far greater than the risk of a complication from a fingertip injury, and it is crucial that NHS staff can concentrate on the very sick. We are therefore offering advice on how you could manage this very common hand injury at home with your own simple first aid equipment:

First aid

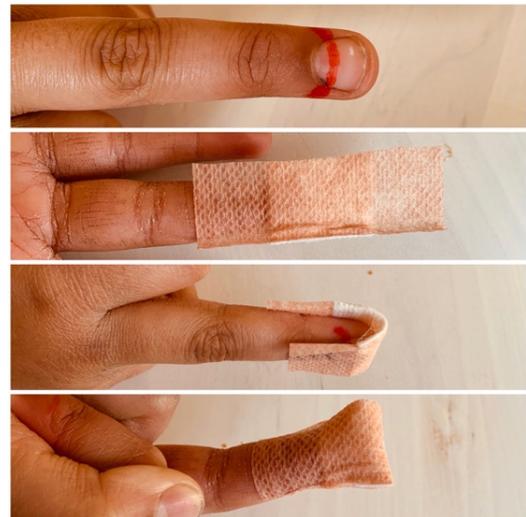
1. Ensure you are safe in your surroundings
2. Sit down calmly
3. Apply a simple clean cloth (e.g. cotton handkerchief, flannel or face cloth.)
4. Wrap this around the injured finger or the whole hand
5. Hold your hand up high, elevating in the air above the level of your heart, for 10 minutes to stop the bleeding.
6. If you drop your hand down too early, your wound may start bleeding again. Do not worry; simply repeat the process.
7. Take simple painkillers like paracetamol, and allow 20 minutes before moving onto the next steps below. (It is advised when possible to avoid ibuprofen during the Covid-19 pandemic)

Even though there might appear to be a lot of bleeding, this type of injury does not cause life-threatening blood loss, and the bleeding will always stop. However, if you have known underlying bleeding disorder or take blood thinning medications, then please call NHS 111 if bleeding persists despite following the above advice). Amputations will require an emergency hospital visit.

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Next steps

8. Gently remove the covering near a sink or a bowl of warm, soapy water
9. Rinse the whole hand in running water.
10. Do not be worried by a small amount of bleeding at this point)
11. Common household antiseptics (e.g. Dettol) may be used if you like, following any instructions on the bottle regarding the correct concentration. Don't worry if none is available; running tap water will be fine.
12. With your hand elevated, dry as much of the hand and finger as you can without touching the tip of the finger.
13. Wait another few minutes until fully dry so that a dressing will stick.
14. Find a large, rectangular plaster (e.g. Elastoplast).
15. Apply from the palm side of the finger and pull over the fingertip, securing it down on the back of the finger. Press the sides together to seal the injured fingertip completely
16. Leave as long as possible – up to 7 days.
17. Cover the whole hand with a small plastic bag secured at the wrist with an elastic band or tape, when taking a shower or bath. Nevertheless, avoid submerging the hand in water or getting too wet, as the bag may not seal the hand completely.
18. A soiled, wet or peeling dressing can be soaked and replaced as above (steps 7-14).
19. Most fingertip injuries will heal by 2 weeks, and can be left without a dressing.



Other useful information

You may notice minor lumpiness, aching or cold intolerance. Do not worry, as this usually settles within 12 months. Beware when touching hot objects as your normal protective sensation may be impaired for a few weeks after injury. Your nail may grow abnormally or even fall off. A new nail should regrow but the fingertip can be sensitive while this happens. Abnormal nail growth is a minor risk, and strategies to address this can be discussed in the future once the risks from the Covid-19 pandemic has passed.



When to seek professional help?

- uncontrolled bleeding
- an amputated part
- pain not settling despite measures above
- signs of infection (redness, offensive smell, discharge (oozing), pain or feeling unwell)
- abnormal nail growth causing repeated minor infections

Further information

The day surgery unit can be contacted on 02476 966861 / 02476 966868 (University Hospital), or on 01788 663264 (Hospital of St. Cross). For further information please visit our hand service's web site at www.tinyurl.com/uhcwhand, or contact:

- Our specialist hand surgery nurse / hand-coordinator on 02476 965072
- Hand Therapy at University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire on 02476 966016
- Hand Therapy at Hospital of St. Cross, Rugby on 01788 663257

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 02476 966861 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Document History

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