

PIPJ dislocations

proximal inter-phalangeal joint dislocations

Introduction

A dislocation is an injury in which the bones in a joint are forced apart and out of their usual positions. To dislocate the bones of a large joint usually needs considerable force. Where two bones meet there are several structures holding them together. These include strong structures called ligaments around the joint. A joint capsule (a fibrous cover around the joint) as well as adjacent tendons and muscles will also stabilise the joint. If the joint is dislocated and injured, any of these structures can be damaged.



Mechanism

This can happen during sports activities (e.g. when stopping fast balls with the hand), or during a fall of when the finger is accidentally caught or twisted with force. The finger may look deformed (crooked and swollen) and will be painful. You will have difficulty moving it normally, and it may go pale or tingle for a short time. Do **not** delay seeking medical treatment.

Treatment

Some people relocate the finger themselves in the heat of the moment during a sporting injury. In general, a dislocated finger needs to be manipulated back into position by a trained medical professional. An x-ray is usually taken afterwards. Applying ice and elevating the hand (above heart level) reduces swelling. Depending on the severity, you may be sent to see a hand specialist afterwards to make sure you get back the full use of your hand.



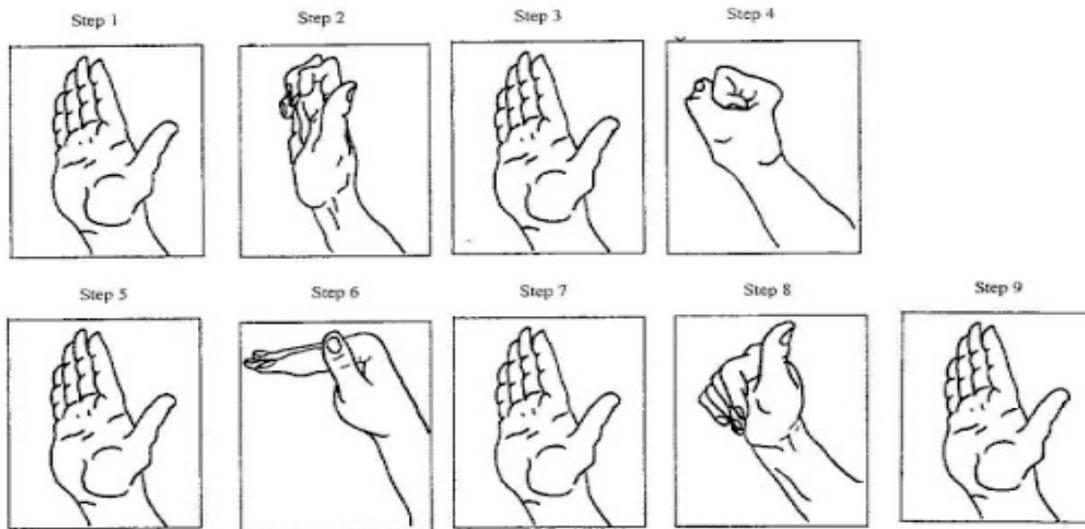
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After the joint has been manipulated back into the correct position, it is usually supported using strapping or a fabric splint to attach in the adjoining finger for support. This can be removed as soon as the finger is more comfortable. Occasionally if the joint remains unstable, a special splint is required on the back of the finger to prevent it from over straightening. This may be required for up to 4-5 weeks, and your rehabilitation will be supervised by our hand therapists who make and adjust these splints.

Hand Therapy

One of the common problems after dislocation is stiffness in the finger which will affect function. It is important therefore to follow the exercises below.



How long will I be off work and when can I drive?

Please liaise with your treating clinician for further advice if unsure. It is your responsibility to ensure you are safe to drive with your splint on and we advise you to discuss the matter with your insurance provider. In general, before returning to driving, we recommend that you are able to make a full pain free fist, be able to grip the steering wheel and perform an emergency stop manoeuvre without any distracting pain.

You will be able to do most everyday activities with your splint or strapping on. You may be able to work with your splint on, but this will depend on your job. You should not start any sporting activities until you are told by your treating clinician it is safe to do so or you may further damage your finger.



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Complications

Most finger joint dislocations heal without any complications. Associated fractures involving a joint may have a greater tendency to become stiff. The following complications may also occur:

- Chronic swelling – extremely common
- Joint stiffness
- Instability or recurrent dislocation
- Flexion contracture
- Post traumatic arthritis
- A pain syndrome

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:

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

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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