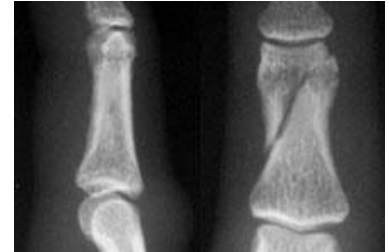


Phalangeal fractures

Introduction

Phalangeal fractures of the hand are usually the result of a direct trauma, crush or twisting injury. A fracture may cause severe pain and swelling in the finger. This may result in a loss of movement and function in the hand.



Treatment

Most finger fractures can be treated without an operation. Taping the injured finger to the uninjured finger(s) next to it (buddy strapping) is a common way to support and encourage movement in the finger. Instead of tape which may irritate the skin if used for prolonged period, a special fabric Bedford splint achieves the same thing and may be offered you when you later.



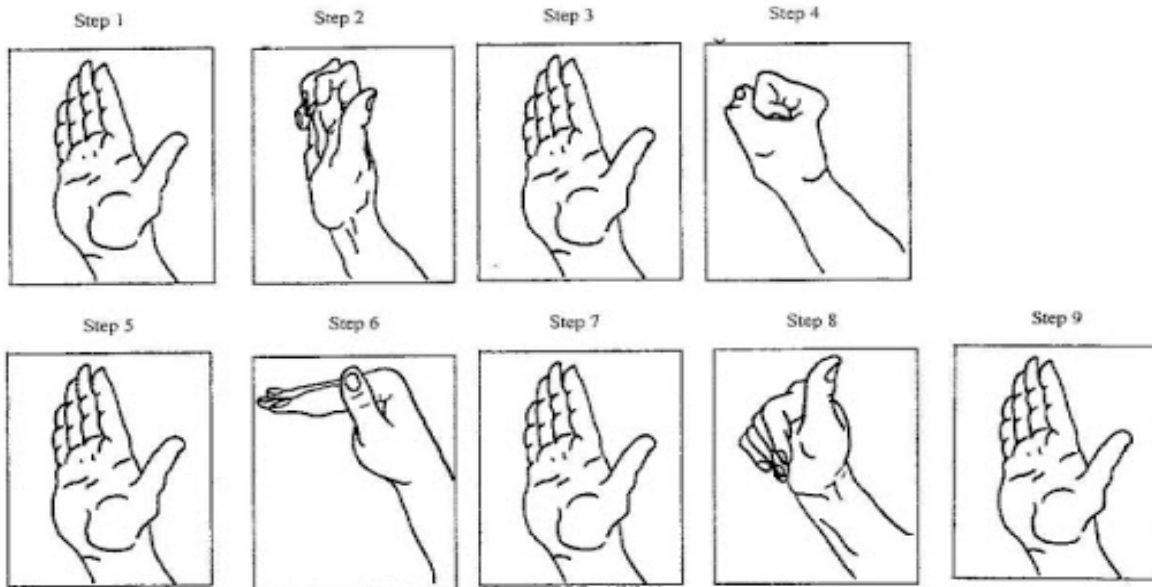
Holding your finger in a fixed position in a splint for 2-8 weeks is a common way to reduce discomfort, allow healing, and prevent further injury. However sometimes, to achieve the best possible outcome, it may be necessary to apply special static or dynamic "traction" splints to hold the broken bones in the right position, while still allowing a controlled and limited amount of motion. Alternatively, the break me complex and require an operation on your finger to position the broken bone(s) correctly and keep them stable using a metal wire or other forms of metalwork until healed.



Hand Therapy

The exercises below should be carried out frequently through the day. They are to increase the range of movement in your finger and reduce the risk of stiffness or loss of muscle function. They may be uncomfortable but should not cause you extreme pain. Please contact us using the details below if you are unable to do these exercises due to extreme pain.

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET



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.

Complications

Most phalangeal fractures heal without any complications. Fractures involving a joint may have more of a tendency to become stiff. The following complications may occur at the fracture site:

- Delayed union: A fracture that takes longer to heal than expected.
- Non-union: A fracture that fails to heal in a reasonable amount of time.
- Mal-union: A fracture that does not heal in a normal alignment
- Stiffness
- A pain syndrome
- Arthritis



PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

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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