

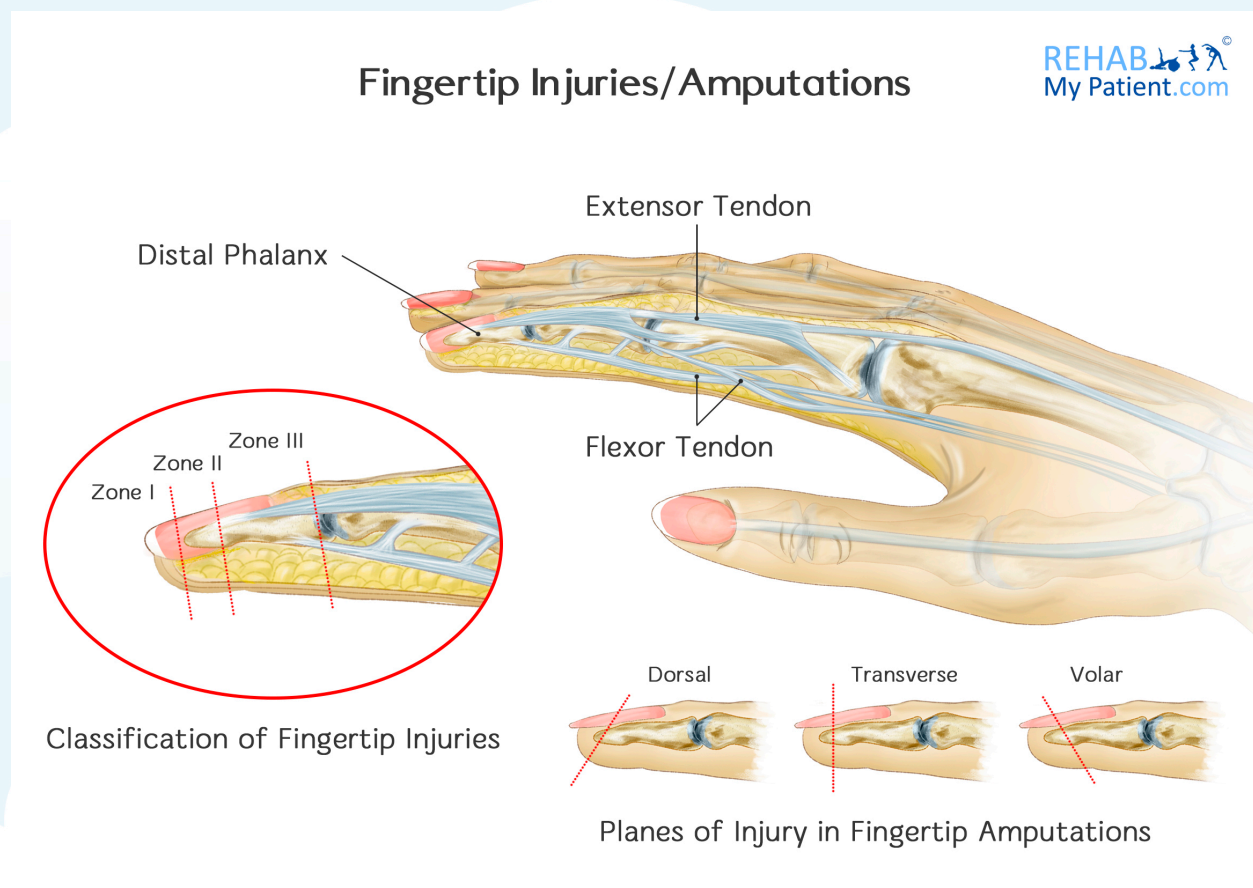
Fingertip Injuries/Amputations

Injuries to the fingertips happen all too often at home, on the job and during play. These injuries can occur when the fingertip is slammed into a car door, chopping vegetables and when trying to clear debris from a snowblower or lawnmower. It can affect climbers and mountaineers. Most commonly losing the end of your finger is due to using tools or machinery at home.

Injuries to the fingertip can be tearing, crushing and amputating to the tips of the thumb and fingers. Injuries can include damage to the soft tissue, skin, nail, bone and nailbed. The tips of the longer fingers are often injured more because they are the last ones to escape from any potential harm. Losing the end of your thumb is less likely, but much more of an issue for the overall function of the hand as it can affect the ability to grip and use tools.

Fingertip Injuries/Amputations Anatomy

Fingertips are dense with nerve endings and finger pads are very sensitive. Without proper and immediate care, an injury to the fingertip can cause a disruption in the complex functions of the hand, which could result in permanent disability or deformity. Doctors need to examine any injuries to the tip of your thumb or finger.



How to Treat a Fingertip Injury/Amputation:

1. Minor Tissue Injury

If the wound is small and only superficial, it may end up closing on its own. A protective dressing might be placed over the wound with instructions on how to change your bandage on a regular basis. A splint might be recommended to protect the tip during the healing process. After one to two days, you might need to soak your finger in a solution of peroxide and warm water. After two days, exercises might be started. It takes anywhere from three to five weeks to complete the healing process.

2. Larger Tissue Injury

If the wound to the tip of the finger is open and large, there might not be enough skin left to heal and cover the area that is open. If the wound is allowed to heal itself, the new skin might not be strong enough. In these instances, surgery is needed to ensure proper healing. During surgery, a piece of skin is used from a different site, such as the palm of the hand and used to cover up the injury. The wound and the donor site are closed using stitches through the procedure.

3. Replantation

If the injury has cut off part of the fingertip, a surgeon might consider the pros and cons of trying to reattach the amputated part. This procedure is long and complicated, but might be the only option to correct the injury. Occasionally toes can be used to replace parts of the fingers.

Tips:

- Full recovery from the injury can take several months.
- After the injury has healed, sensitivity to cold and mild to severe pain can continue for a year and could end up being permanent.
- Physical therapy exercises are useful to improve range of motion and strengthen the hand.
- Massage and heat therapy, splinting, traction, electric stimulation of the nerves within the hand and special wrapping to help minimize swelling are some of the examples of additional therapies that the therapist might use to promote healing.
- Avoid placing the amputated part in ice directly. You could end up damaging the fingertip even further. Wrap it up first.