

Interphalangeal Joint Dislocation

An interphalangeal joint dislocation occurs from a trauma to the hand causing the bones in the middle joint of a finger to become dislodged. It often results in an extremely painful, bruised and swollen joint that doesn't move properly, if it moves at all. A sprain happens when the ligaments are torn or pulled and the finger joint moves out of its normal socket.

A suspected dislocation or sprain needs to be treated and evaluated as quickly as possible. Some people will try to pull the finger back in to place, but the general guidance is that this should be done by a medical professional. Common causes of a dislocation are from an injury or direct trauma to the hand. This can happen during a twisting injury, a fall or from playing sports. Common sports are contact or combat sports, or snow sports. If you suspect a dislocation, you need to seek medical attention quickly and ice the area.

Once the finger is relocated, you can expect several months of pain and swelling. The finger will be stiff for several weeks due to inflammation. The ligaments need to heal before the pain goes. You will likely be left with a deviated finger or a finger that sits at a "funny angle".

Part of your rehab will be to ice the finger, and also to push the finger by bending it to get the mobility back.

Interphalangeal Joint Dislocation Anatomy

The anatomy within the hand is quite complex, fascinating and intricate. Its integrity is imperative for individuals to be able to go through life on a regular basis and engage in normal activities. Hands can be affected by any number of disorders, but often from a traumatic injury.

Within the hand, there are 27 bones. Eight bones are within the carpals of your wrist. The palm of the hand contains five bones known as the metacarpals. The 14 bones within the fingers are known as the phalanges.



An X-ray of a patient who dislocated and then relocated her finger following a fall

How to Treat an Interphalangeal Joint Dislocation:

1. Ice

Apply ice to the affected area for 5-10 minutes at a time three to five times per day. Make sure to use a towel to wrap the ice to avoid getting an ice burn on the affected area.

2. Splint or Cast

By splinting or casting the affected hand, you can minimize movement and allow the bones the time they need to heal properly. If you keep moving your hand and joint, the injury site won't be able to heal.

3. Anti-Inflammatory Medication

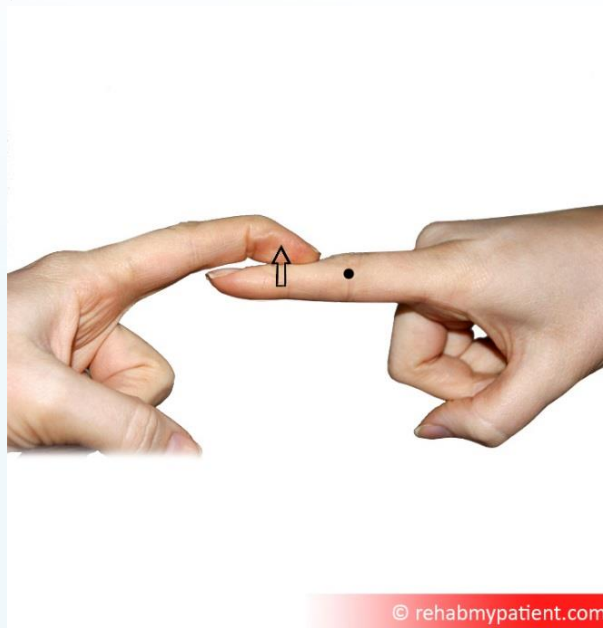
Taking an anti-inflammatory medication will help to alleviate some of the swelling and discomfort found in the joint. As you decrease the swelling, the pain level will also decrease.

4. Realignment of the Bones

In cases of joint dislocations, you will need to get them re-set into position quickly. Most of the time, this will need to be done in an emergency room setting, urgent care facility or somewhere with a qualified medical professional. A follow-up examination with a surgeon is important after realigning the bones.

5. Therapy

Fairly soon after the finger is located, you can start therapy and rehab on the finger. Your therapist will prescribe exercises for you to help you bend and straighten your finger. Treatment may also be provided to help stop the stiffness.



Tips:

- Athletes who participate in contact sports are more at risk for this particular dislocation.
- If you are prone to falling, there is a good chance that you could end up dislocating your finger.
- If you naturally have weak ligaments, dislocating one of your joints is easier.
- For those who live a highly active lifestyle, you could end up doing something that dislocates your joint without being aware of it at the time.
- If you notice a loss of function in the joint, you need to be examined by a medical professional for further treatment.