

Mallet Finger (Baseball Finger)

Mallet finger is a finger deformity caused when the extensor tendon is damaged. Whenever a ball or other hard objects strikes into the tip of the thumb or the finger, the force causes damage to the thin tendon responsible for straightening the finger. The force from the blow might pull part of the bone along with that of the tendon. The thumb or finger cannot be straightened. It has also been termed baseball finger.

The finger will often have a lot of pain. It will also become bruised and swollen from the injury. The tip of the finger might droop significantly. On occasion, blood will pool beneath of the nail. The nail might even become detached from the skin underneath at the base of the nail.

The injury usually happens when a strike occurs directly to the end of the finger, such as a baseball or hard ball hitting it, or hitting the finger with a mallet.

Mallet Finger (Baseball Finger) Anatomy

All of the fingers have three distinct bones in them, while the thumb only has two bones. At each one of the joints, the bones are held into place with ligaments. Muscles within the forearm or hand turn into tendons, which attaches the bones to the finger. It is the muscles that move the fingers by pulling the tendons back. All of the bones are attached to the five metacarpal bones making up the body in the hand.



How to Treat Mallet Finger (Baseball Finger):

1. Ice

Apply ice to the affected finger for 5-10 minutes at a time three to five times per day. Make sure you have the ice wrapped with a thin towel to avoid getting an ice burn.

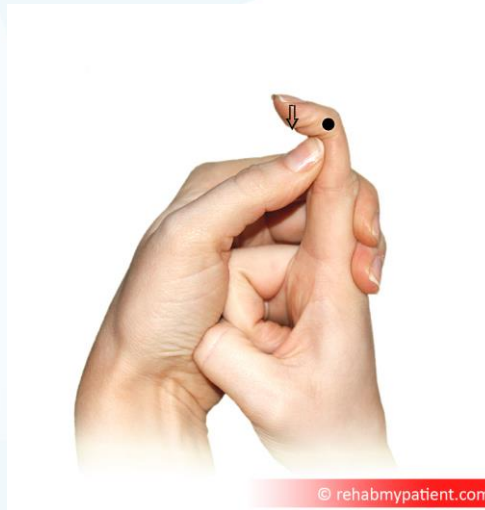


2. Splint

A splint might be applied to keep the finger straight until it is properly healed. Most of the time, the splint has to be worn full-time for a minimum of eight weeks. Over the next three to four weeks, patients will be able to wear their splint less and less frequently. Even though the finger will often regain an acceptable amount of function in it, many patients aren't able to regain full extension. Compression can also help and you could wrap a bandage around the finger.

3. Therapy

Hand therapy from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist can be useful as they will make a splint for the finger, guide you on exercises, or treat the finger with soft tissue techniques and/or electrotherapy.



4. Surgery

Surgical repair might be needed when the injury shows signs of larger fragments or joint malalignment. Surgery is used to repair the fractured site with pins, small screws or pins and wire. Surgery might also be needed when traditional non-surgical methods fail.

Tips:

- To prevent the injury in the first place, make sure to exercise caution whenever participating in any activity, especially those of athletic events.
- To prevent recurring injuries to the same finger, leave the splint in place for the duration instructed by your provider.
- If you have a cut on the finger as well, clean it out under running water for at least a few minutes before wrapping the finger with a clean cloth or gauze.
- If you have a finger deformity, a specialist might have to monitor the progress of the injury.
- Exercise caution when playing baseball to make sure a flying ball doesn't injure your finger and cause the condition.