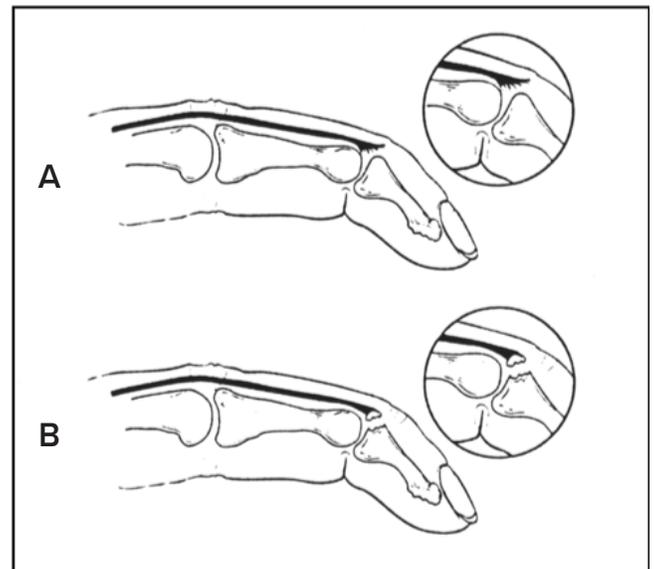


## Definition

The tendon that is responsible for lifting or straightening the end of your finger is injured. The injury is either when the tendon pulls off the bone (A) or when a small bit of bone is pulled off with the tendon (B).



## Clinical Symptoms

The hallmark of a mallet finger is the way the end joint of the finger looks—droopy or bent. It is said that a mallet finger looks like the mallet of a piano hammer or a carpenter’s mallet. There is a bend in the end joint of the finger along with the inability to straighten the finger. Often a bump is seen on the back of the end joint of the finger, which is sore.

## Who gets a Mallet Finger?

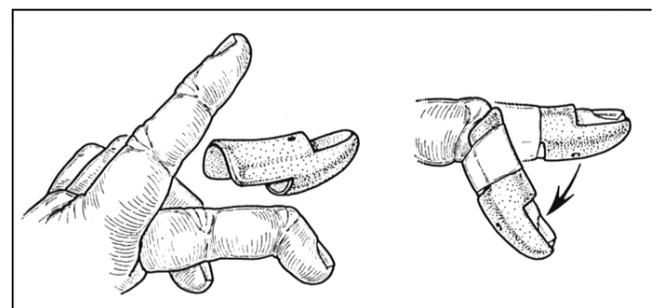
Anyone can get a mallet finger. Most often it is associated with a blow to the end of the finger such as in “jamming” the finger in a sports activity or striking the finger end on against an object.

## How do you know I have a Mallet Finger and not something else?

The symptoms and physical exam performed in the office can confirm the problem. I will take a take an X-ray of your finger as well as a thorough history and examination.

## What is the treatment?

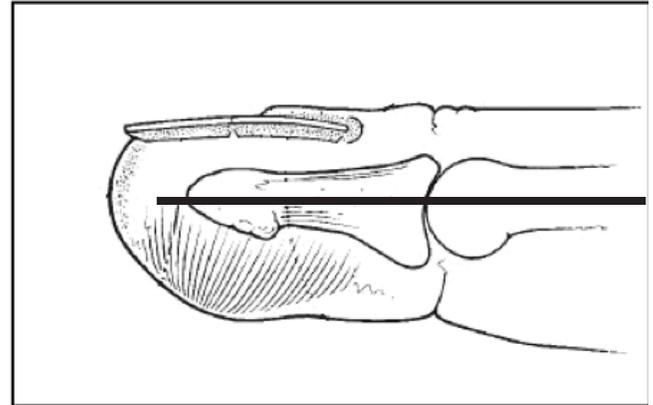
The treatment is very straightforward for most mallet fingers - but it is annoying because it takes longer than you think it should. A splint is used on the end of the finger to hold it straight *constantly*, 24 hours a day, for 8 weeks and then at night time for an additional 4 weeks. About twelve weeks total. Your doctor may modify this time a bit.



Some cases require surgery. A large fracture may be an indication for surgery. Additionally, a mallet finger that was not treated in the first several weeks *may* need surgery. It is always better to start splint treatment as soon as possible and not let weeks go by.

When surgery is required, a small metal pin is used to hold the joint straight for approximately 6-8 weeks.

Some patients find that wearing the splint constantly for 8 weeks is frustrating or do to their personal activities they cannot commit to wearing the splint. Placement of a pin with surgery is an alternative to using a splint. The time, however, is still 6-8 weeks.



**Pinning of the Joint**

## What is the recovery from surgery like?

After the operation, a padded bandage is used for several days. Within a few days of the surgery we will provide a protective splint to wear when you are very active. You are allowed to use your fingers the very first day. After six weeks, the pin is easily removed in the office and work is begun on moving the end joint of the finger, which is expected to be stiff for several weeks.

\* Most people, whether they need surgery or not, are satisfied with the appearance of their finger. However, not everyone has a perfectly straight finger after treatment. Some patients notice a bump on the end of their finger and may see a “lag” or a “droop” in their finger.

## Will I need therapy afterward?

Each patient’s case is handled separately and some patients do benefit from a short course of therapy especially after surgery.

## Other sources of information on this topic

American Society for Surgery of the Hand

[www.hand-surg.org](http://www.hand-surg.org)

American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons

[www.assh.org](http://www.assh.org)