



## MALLET FINGER FAQ

### **1) What is a mallet finger?**

It is a deformity caused by rupture of the tendon at the tip of the finger. This can also occur with a fracture.

### **2) What does a mallet finger look like?**

It is a finger that is bent at the tip and one cannot make it straight.

### **3) Can it get worst if it goes untreated?**

It can stay the same or get worst.

### **4) Does it need surgery?**

If the finger is bleeding or has an open wound it should be treated immediately.

If there is a fracture that is large or out of position it may need surgery. If there is no fracture, splinting the finger in a straight position may be all that is necessary but it must be properly evaluated by a hand surgeon to make sure there are no additional problems.

### **5) What type of doctor treats a mallet finger?**

A hand surgeon, an orthopaedic, plastic or general surgeon that specializes in hand injuries, is most helpful. He or she may refer you to a hand therapist for splinting and monitoring the condition.

### **6) How long does the splint have to stay on?**

Splinting must be continuous. That is, the splint must not be removed for washing, showering or any other activity. The splint must stay on full time for a minimum of eight weeks and an additional two weeks for protective activities. The splinting time may vary if there are additional complications.

**7) Will the finger be stiff after the splinting period?**

The finger will regain movement very gradually. It should not be forced because mallet deformity could reoccur. The hand surgeon may send you to a therapist to be instructed in proper care and exercises.

**8) Will the finger look normal after the injury?**

The tip of the finger may remain slightly thicker. There may also be a slight loss in movement, that is, it may not be fully straight or may not bend fully. Most mallet injuries recover full function.

**9) Is there a lot of pain?**

When the injury is to the tendon, there may be no pain. Some people do experience pain if there is a fracture. During the splinting process the pain is minimal. Once therapy or exercises begin, pain is also minimal. It is mostly a feeling of stiffness.