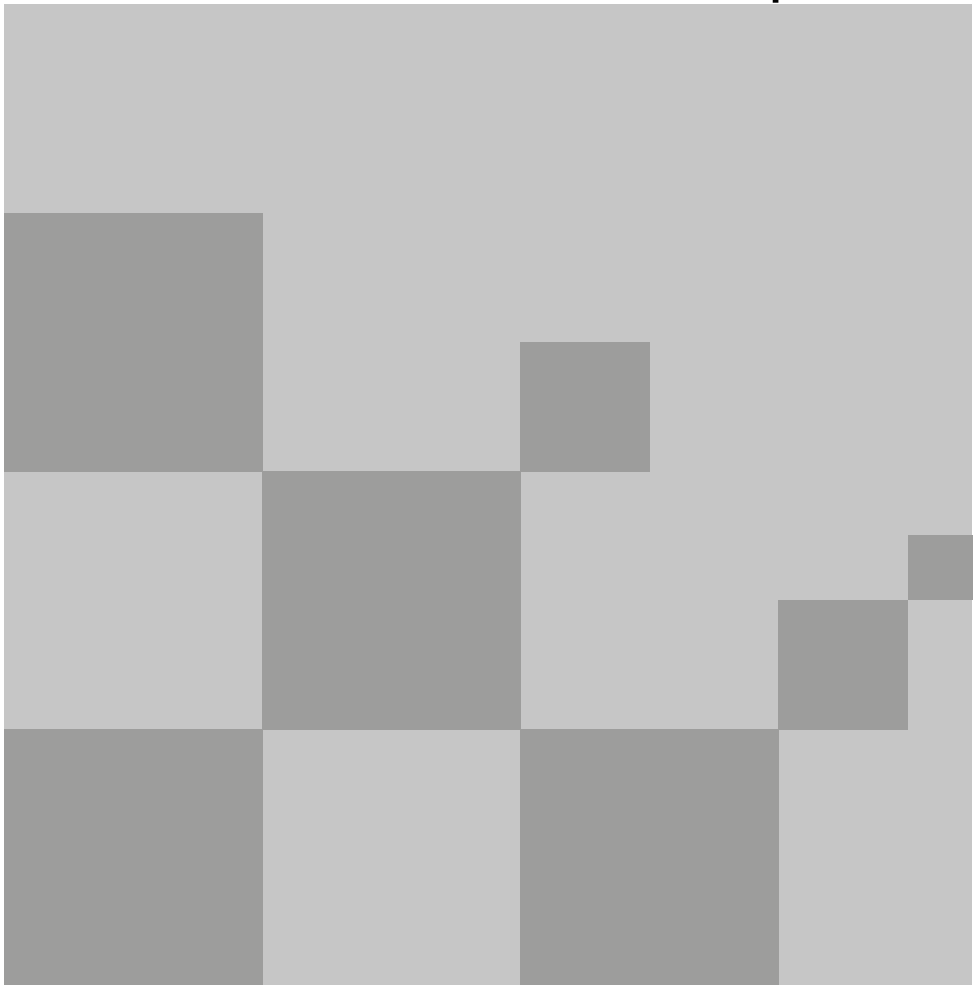


Physiotherapy Department

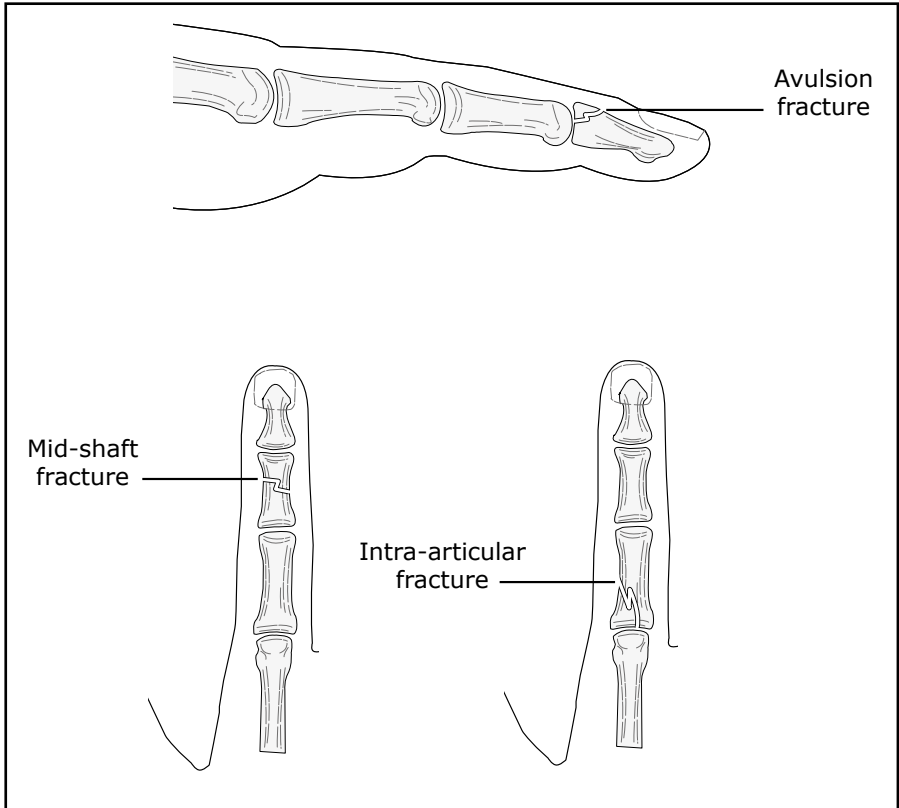
Phalangeal Fractures

Information for patients



What is a phalangeal fracture?

Our fingers are made up of bones called phalanges. If you break one of these bones you have a phalangeal fracture. There are different types of phalangeal fracture.



The cause

Phalangeal fractures of the hand are usually the result of a direct trauma, crush or twisting injury.

Symptoms

The fracture will cause severe pain and swelling in the finger.

Diagnosis

Usually you will see a doctor or specialist nurse in A&E who will examine you and arrange an X-ray if they suspect you have broken a bone.

Treatment

Many fractures can be treated without an operation.

Holding your finger a fixed position in a splint for 2-8 weeks is a common way to prevent further discomfort or injury. Sometimes just taping the broken finger to the uninjured finger(s) next to it will be enough.

However, sometimes, to achieve the best possible outcome, it may be necessary to operate on your finger.

If you have an open fracture, where the skin is broken, this will need to be cleaned thoroughly during surgery to prevent infection. It may be necessary to use a wire to keep the fracture in place until it heals. This wire will be removed at an outpatient appointment after approximately 3 weeks.

Rehabilitation

After the fracture has healed you may be left with a stiff finger joint. Rehabilitation can be long and difficult. Early physiotherapy can in some cases prevent long term stiffness and soft tissue wasting. As soon as any splint is taken off it is important to start using your hand/finger to help it regain flexibility and strength.

General finger exercises

The exercises below can be carried out little and often throughout the day. They should not be continued if they cause you extreme discomfort or if you have been given alternative guidance by your Doctor or Physiotherapist. They are to increase the range of movement in your finger and reduce the risk of stiffness or loss of muscle function.

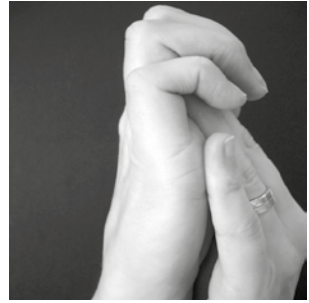
- 1) Holding your middle and big knuckle straight with your other hand, bend the top joint as far down as is comfortable, until you feel a gentle stretch.
Straighten fully.



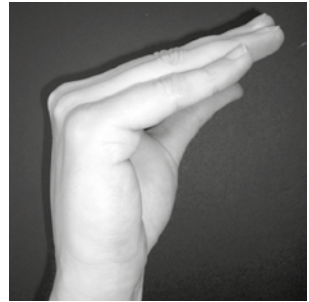
- 2) Holding your big knuckle straight, bend the middle joint over as far as comfortable, until you feel a gentle stretch.
Straighten fully.



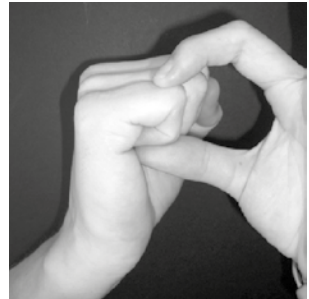
- 3) Holding your big knuckle straight, bend the top two joints over as far as is comfortable, until you feel a gentle stretch.
Straighten fully.



- 4) Keeping your fingers straight, bend the big knuckle over as far as comfortable, until you feel a gentle stretch.
Straighten fully.



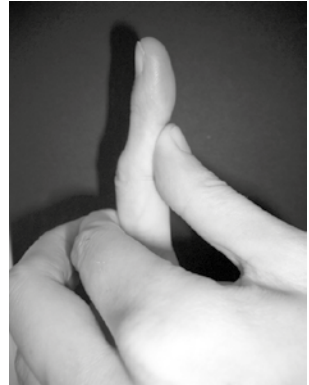
- 5) Combining all three joints, bend your fingers into the palm of your hand, making a fist.
Check you have taken each joint down as far as you can, until you feel a gentle stretch.
Straighten fully.



- 6a) Straighten your fingers up (without the other hand), making sure each joint is as straight as you can comfortably take it.
Watch you do not over straighten your big knuckle.
Hold for 10-20 seconds.



6b) Supporting your middle joint with your index (pointing) finger of the other hand, gently use your thumb to straighten your finger. Watch you do not over straighten the big knuckle. Hold for 10-20 seconds.



If you do sports, it's essential to follow your Consultant's advice about when you can safely restart your activities. It may be necessary to protect or secure your finger in the short-term, to prevent it from being injured further.

Complications

Most phalangeal fractures heal without any complications. Fractures involving a joint may have more of a tendency to become stiff. The following complications can occur:

- Delayed union:** A fracture that takes longer to heal than expected.
- Non-union:** A fracture that fails to heal in a reasonable amount of time.
- Mal-union:** A fracture that does not heal in a normal alignment (not straight or where it should be).

Questions and how to contact us

If you have any questions, please contact us at the:

Physiotherapy Department Reception
Horton General Hospital
Banbury
Tel: **01295 229 432**

Physiotherapy Department
East Oxford Health Centre
Cowley Road
Oxford
Tel: **01865 264 970**

Trauma Physiotherapy Outpatients
John Radcliffe Hospital
Oxford
Tel: **01865 221 540**

Hand Therapy, John Radcliffe Hospital
Tel: **01865 231 181**

Hand Therapy, Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre
Tel: **01865 738 082**
Tel: **01865 738 074**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter,
a document in Easy Read, another language, large print,
Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473**
or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Huw Jones, Senior Physiotherapist
Anne Alexander, Senior Physiotherapist
October 2014
Review: October 2017
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

