

Simple (undisplaced) phalanx (finger) fractures in children

Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has sustained a simple (undisplaced) phalanx (finger) fracture. It explains what a phalanx fracture is and how it is treated. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is a phalanx fracture?

A phalanx fracture is a break of a phalanx (one of the small bones in the fingers and toes). If more than one phalanx is broken, the injury is called a phalanges fracture.

A simple or undisplaced phalanx fracture means that the bone is broken but it is still in a straight line.

What causes this type of injury?

A phalanx fracture is a common injury in children. It is usually caused by a direct trauma, being crushed or a twisting injury.

How is this type of injury treated?

Phalanx fractures generally heal by themselves without the need for surgery in six weeks.

Splint or buddy strapping

We may place your child's injured finger in a splint (a medical device that holds the injured finger in place, preventing it from moving or bending) or we may tape your child's injured finger to the finger next to it for support. This is called buddy strapping. Both are suitable treatments for your child's injury. If we apply strapping to your child's fingers, please see the instructions below on how to correctly change the strapping at home:

1. Place a bit of padding between your child's two fingers to prevent the skin rubbing.
2. Place one piece of tape around both fingers, between the first and second joints (the places where the fingers bend).
3. Place another piece of tape around both fingers, between the second and third joints. This allows your child to still move their injured finger and grip things.

It is important that you change your child's strapping **daily**. This will allow you or your child to clean the skin of their injured finger and check for signs of irritation (for example, redness, skin colour changes and itchiness).

If your child's fingers start changing colour or they experience a pins and needles sensation in their fingers that wasn't there before, the strapping is too tight and will need to be repeated.

Pain relief medication

Your child will usually experience the worst pain the first few days after their injury. Regular pain relief medications, such as paracetamol (Calpol®) and ibuprofen, will help to ease their discomfort. Always check the label before giving your child any over-the-counter medications.

Rest, ice and elevation

Swelling and bruising around your child's finger will usually settle down within two to three weeks. To help reduce any swelling, your child should rest and elevate (raise above their heart level) their injured finger and apply ice (an ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) to it for one to two minutes, three times a day for the first few days.

Are there any complications?

Most phalanx fractures heal without difficulty. However, occasionally, some children may experience the following complications:

- stiffness
- deformity (the finger looks different from normal)
- the injured finger crossing over the finger next to it

If you have any concerns about how your child's injury is healing, contact us for advice.

When can my child resume their normal daily activities?

Weeks since your child's injury	Recovery plan
0 to 3	Your child should: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use the splint or buddy strapping for comfort• move their fingers gently and use their hand as often as they can to prevent stiffness
3 to 6	Your child should: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• remove the splint or buddy strapping when their pain eases• resume their normal daily activities (as much as they can without experiencing pain)• begin to move their hand more and do normal daily tasks• avoid any heavy lifting Your child should not participate in any contact sports or high impact activities, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• basketball• cricket• football• hockey• horse riding• ice skating• rugby• skiing

Will my child need any follow-up care?

Most children will not need physiotherapy or any follow-up appointments after this type of injury and should gradually regain full strength and movement in their finger over time.

When should I seek medical help?

Contact us if your child's finger becomes:

- stiff
- weak
- deformed
- painful
- discoloured

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Children's outpatient department

Telephone: **023 8120 4477** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm)

Email: paedorthopaedics@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/broken-finger

www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-information-leaflets

www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport

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