

# Volar plate injuries in children

## Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has sustained a volar plate injury. It explains what a volar plate injury 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 volar plate injury?

The volar plate is a small ligament (a tough, fibrous band of connective tissue that attaches bone to bone) on the palm side of the joints of each finger and thumb. It helps support the joints and prevents them from being overstretched or dislocated (when a bone slips out of a joint).

A volar plate injury occurs when one of the finger or thumb joints is bent too far backwards (this is known as hyperextension). A volar plate can be partially or fully torn, or it can pull off a small piece of bone (this is called an avulsion fracture).

The most common volar plate injury is to the middle joint of the finger.

### What causes this type of injury?

A volar plate injury is a common injury in children. It is usually caused by a sporting accident (for example, a football or netball hitting the end of a finger), but it can also be caused by a fall or everyday activities.

### How is this type of injury diagnosed?

An x-ray (a quick and painless procedure commonly used to produce images of the inside of the body) has confirmed your child's injury.

### How is this type of injury treated?

Volar plate injuries generally heal by themselves without treatment in six weeks.

## Buddy strapping

We may strap your child's injured finger to the finger next to it for support as it heals. This is called buddy strapping. We may use tape or a double Tubigrip (an elasticated tubular support bandage). With the strapping in place, your child will still be able to bend their fingers.

If we apply **tape** 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 tape 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 or thumb start changing colour or they experience a pins and needles sensation that wasn't there before, the strapping is too tight and will need to be repeated.

Your child will need to have their injured finger strapped to the neighbouring one for approximately two to three weeks. The strapping should be kept on day and night, but your child can remove it to wash their hands or shower or bathe.

If after three weeks your child still has pain or swelling, the strapping can continue to be worn at night and/or at school until it improves.

## Rest and elevation

Your child may experience some swelling in their finger for a few weeks after their injury. To help reduce swelling, your child should rest and elevate (raise above their heart level) their injured hand for the first few days (for example, in a sling or on some pillows).

Your child should try to bend and straighten their fingers and thumb regularly while their injury heals.

## Pain relief medication

Your child may experience some pain, swelling and bruising in their finger or thumb for a few weeks after their injury. Taking pain relief medications, such as paracetamol (Calpol®) and ibuprofen, for the first few days after the injury will help to ease their discomfort. Always check the label before giving your child any over-the-counter medications.

## Are there any complications?

Your child's injured finger or thumb may feel stiff for up to six weeks after their injury. This should improve as your child starts to use their finger or thumb more. If this doesn't improve after six weeks, contact us for advice.

## When can my child resume their normal daily activities?

For six weeks after their injury, your child should **not**:

- participate in any contact sports (like netball, football and rugby), playground activities or physical education (PE)
- over straighten their injured finger or thumb

## Will my child need any follow-up care?

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

## When should I seek medical help?

Contact us if your child has:

- pain in their hand that increases quickly and without warning.
- pain that does not improve after taking regular pain relief medication.
- a numb sensation in their hand.
- difficulty moving their fingers or thumb.
- any deformity (your child's finger or thumb looks different from normal).

## 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](mailto:paedorthopaedics@uhs.nhs.uk)

## Useful links

[www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/conditions/1021/volar\\_plate\\_injury](http://www.bssh.ac.uk/patients/conditions/1021/volar_plate_injury)

[www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/x-ray](http://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/x-ray)

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-information-leaflets)

[www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk](http://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](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)**