

Metacarpal fracture of the hand

The information in this leaflet is to help you understand your injury and the best way to manage it.

There are many terms that can be used to describe your injury. The common ones are fracture, break and crack-they all mean the same thing. When you have an injury like yours it is not just the bone that is affected. You will also have injured some of the soft tissues around it. Soft tissues include the muscles, ligaments, tendons and nerves



Recovery Times

Most of the healing happens between 3-4 weeks

It is not unusual to have aches and discomfort beyond this, often when you do activities you haven't done for a while. Sometimes the area is more sensitive for months and this is normal.

Things that could affect your recovery

Smoking

Smoking slows fracture healing times. In some people, it can stop healing altogether. Smoking affects all your tissues; stopping smoking during the healing phase of your fracture will help ensure the best recovery.

For help to [stop smoking](#)

General Health

Some medical conditions may slow down the healing e.g. diabetes

Eating a [healthy diet](#) and keeping yourself active will help you recovery

Medication

Some medications you are already taking can slow down fracture healing. If you have concerns about your medication talk to a health professional.

Anti-inflammatory medication has been shown to delay healing eg Ibuprofen, naproxen

What to expect

This is usually a minor fracture but can be debilitating as you cannot use your hand normally.

- Even though it will be uncomfortable, moving the fingers early will improve your function and recovery.

Pain

It is normal to have some discomfort in the areas around your fracture. The areas affected can be:

- Other soft tissues
- Nearby joints
- Areas which have been immobilised

Pain changes from day to day, it doesn't always depend on what you are doing. It is not unusual to have pain at rest. It is normal to have some pain even when your fracture has healed. Some people experience discomfort in the fracture site with colder weather. This is normal.

Should I take painkillers after a fracture? Click on this link for advice about [painkillers](#)

Swelling

Swelling is the start of healing. It is normal to have it near the fracture first. It often spreads down to your fingers.

The amount of swelling changes with your position, activity or the time of day.

Even when your fracture has healed it is normal to have some swelling and this can last for months.

There is usually a bony lump at the fracture site. This may reduce slightly with time.

You may notice that your knuckle is not prominent because the bone can shorten as a result of this injury. This is common and will not change if present..

How can I help the swelling?

- Raise your arm above your heart when you are resting .
- Keep the other joints in your arm and hand moving normally
- Avoid too much rest and too much activity
- You can massage the swelling from tips of fingers towards the armpit.

Having a lot of swelling can become uncomfortable or limit your movement.

Bruising

It is normal to have bruising. Bruising can be widespread and appear further away from your fracture. It changes colour as it recovers and can be very purple to start with. Usually you will see it between the web spaces of your fingers.

Getting back to normal activities

In general gradually pace yourself back to your activities as you feel able.

Driving

It is your responsibility to ensure you are in full control of your vehicle

Your injury may affect your insurance and you should contact your insurer before driving.

You need to be able to grip the steering wheel and use indicators and handbrake safely.

The general advice is you must be able to safely perform an emergency stop or manoeuvre.

Work

Your return to work will depend on the type of work you do and your employer. It may be possible to discuss a phased return to work, changed duties etc. You don't need to see a health care professional to return to work.

Hobbies/interests

Keep doing any activities you are able, as your pain allows. Gradually increase what you do. Reduced flexibility and strength may make things more difficult to start with. This will get better as you slowly build up to all your usual activities.

Mood

Frustration or low mood after your injury is normal, as you get back to normal life this will get better. If this is a major issue discuss with your GP or see [links](#).

Falls

Loss of confidence is common after a fracture; here are some links that may help:

[Balance Ex Link](#)

Bone scanning

You may be sent a letter inviting you for a scan of your bone density. This is routine if you fit the criteria and is nothing to worry about.

Exercises for your Hand

It is safe to follow these exercises for your [injured hand](#) (Practice short duration hourly ROM) and one to strengthen at about 6 weeks (hyperlink). Timescales for this are below.

<disclaimer>

Weeks	Plan
0-2wks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Manage your pain and swelling✓ May be buddy taped (injured finger to its neighbour). Move joints within tape restriction as able and further as able when replacing tape after washing hand.✓ Use your hand for light activities. No heavy lifting or lifting hot items.
2-6wks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Buddy taping removed and progress exercises(see pictures page4). There are 3 hinged joints in each finger. Try and move them hourly .Bend and fully straighten each joint. Do not force. The base of the thumb joint allows it to roll and touch the fingers, practice this. The higher joint in the thumb is a hinge it will bend and straighten✓ Gradually increase the use of your hand in normal daily activities.

6-12wks

- ✓ Return to full function/resume normal day to day activity
- ✓ Return to higher impact activity nearer to 3 months. If you are a boxer check with your Dr before recommencing



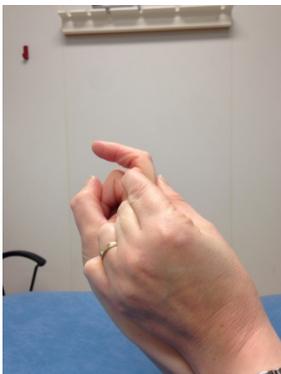
touch the tip of each finger until you reach the tip of the little finger. Once you can manage this try to reach the base of the little finger.

Repeat 10-20 repetitions hourly



Use your unaffected hand to securely hold your affected finger under the last joint in your finger. Gently bend and straighten your finger.

Repeat 10-20 repetitions hourly



Use your unaffected hand to securely hold your affected finger under the middle joint in your finger. Gently bend and straighten your finger.

Repeat 10-20 repetitions hourly



Use your unaffected hand to securely hold your affected finger under the knuckle joint in your finger. Gently bend and straighten your finger.

Repeat 10-20 repetitions hourly