



Finger Phalanx Fracture Nonoperative Treatment

Patient Instructions

Laith Al-Shihabi, MD

0-3 weeks

Pain medication:

- Use your prescription pain medication as needed to control pain.
- Do not drive or operate machinery while taking narcotic/opioid pain medication.
- Unless you cannot take them for other medical reasons, it is ok to use over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Advil or Aleve) in addition to your prescription pain medication. Do not take tylenol as your prescription already contains this medication.

Cast/Splint:

- Some fractures require a splint or cast for protection. If a splint is used, keep it in place at all times.
- Elevation of the hand, along with ice on-and-off for 20 minutes at a time, will help with swelling and pain.
- It is ok to shower, but the cotton or cloth within a splint must stay clean and dry. Place a waterproof covering over the dressings while bathing or showering (such as a heavy plastic bag that is sealed with Saran wrap).
- If the splint gets dirty, wet, or comes apart please contact the office to have the dressing re-done.

Taping:

- Some fractures can be treated by taping to the neighboring finger as a splint.
- The tape can be removed for washing your hands or showering, but otherwise should be worn full time.

Motion:

- Start moving your fingers and part of the thumb that is not in the splint as soon as possible.
- If buddy taping was used, gently move the injured fingers within the limits of the tape.
- You can use your hand for light activity, such as eating, drinking, or using a computer.
- Do not lift, carry, push, or pull anything heavier than a glass of water or can of soda.

3-6 weeks (First check-up visit)

Splint/Tape:

- If a splint was used, you can come out of it for motion exercises at 3 weeks and discontinue it at 4-5 weeks.
- Buddy taping can be removed for motion exercises and discontinued at 4 weeks.

Motion:

- Begin stretching exercises along with finger motion exercises at 3-4 weeks.
- Continue to avoid lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling anything heavier than a glass of water until 6 weeks.
- Hand therapy may be started for finger motion if stiffness is a problem.

6 -10 weeks (Second check-up visit)

Splint:

- No longer necessary.

Motion:

- Continue finger and wrist range of motion and stretching.
- Begin finger strengthening using putty.
- You can lift/carry up to 5lbs (about 1/2 gallon of milk) as your symptoms allow at 6 weeks.
- You can lift/carry up to 10-15 lbs starting at 8 weeks.

10+ weeks (Third check-up visit)

No further therapy beyond normal use of the hand should be required at this point. There are no lifting/carrying or other activity restrictions after 12 weeks, unless otherwise discussed on a case-by-case basis.