Finger/ Thumb Injury Advice

Your injury or wound will have been assessed by a Nurse Practitioner or a Doctor, and the range of movement will have been assessed along with your ability to feel sensation.

If you have a wound, it will have been checked to see that deeper structures have not been damaged. It may then have been closed, usually with sutures (stitches). If you find that over the course of the next 7 - 10 days you can't fully stretch out or fully bend your fingers or thumb it is very important that you return to the department where you were seen, so that we can re-assess you. If you have had a wound and feel there is an altered sensation of the finger/thumb after being discharged its important you return at the earliest for us to re-assess you again.

Why do I need to exercise my finger after an injury?

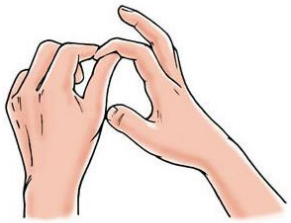
It is important that you start to move your fingers/thumb as soon as possible especially for simple things e.g., eating/dressing, as it can make them stronger and so help your finger/thumb back to full function, flexibility and strength.
As each day goes by, you should be able to move your fingers/thumb more easily and with lessening discomfort.
Within the first 24 to 48 hours after a finger or thumb injury/wound you should reduce your activities but move as much as your symptoms allow- aim to move your finger/thumb gently for 10 to 20 seconds every hour when you're awake.
After 48 hours, try to use your thumb/fingers more - exercise really helps you hand.
When doing exercise you should listen to your pain levels, especially in the early stages. You may find that these exercises (see below) increase your symptoms slightly in the beginning. However, they should get easier over time

Exercise 1: Finger Extension

- Place your injured hand flat on a table, palm down.
- Lift and then lower your affected finger off the table.
- Repeat 10 times and 3-4 times a day a day



Exercise 2: Range of Motion



This exercise can help you straighten your finger(s), which will make movement easier.

- Use your uninjured hand to slowly straighten and bend the injured finger(s).
- Bend it and hold for 20 seconds then straighten it
- Repeat this 10 times and 3-4 times a day

Exercise 3: Make a fist and stretch



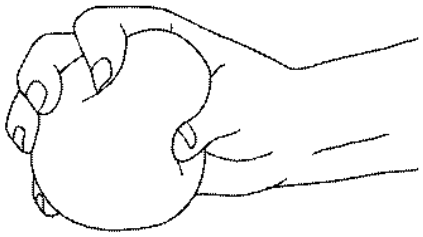
- Make a gentle fist, by gradually curling your fingers inwards. Start at the top joints of your fingers, then the middle ones and then finally curl in the knuckles, finally wrapping your thumb across your fingers.



- Hold for a few seconds.
- Release and slowly straighten out your fingers, spreading them as wide as you can – Stretch only until you feel tightness.
- Repeat this 10 times and 3-4 times a day

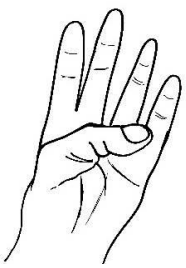
Exercise 4: Grip Strengthening

You can do this exercise using only your hand, or you can squeeze a ball (for example, a soft "stress" ball or a tennis ball). If you use a tennis ball, make a cut in the side of the ball to make it easier to squeeze.



- Hold a soft ball in your palm and squeeze it as hard as you can.
- Hold for a few seconds and release.
- Repeat this 10 times, then rest and repeat sequence 3 times – do this exercise every day

Exercise 5: Thumb Stretches



- Hold your hand out, palm facing you.
- Gently bend the tip of your thumb and then bend it towards the base of your little finger.
- Hold for 20 seconds.
- Release and repeat 10 times, and 3- 4 times a day

The following advice should also help you to recover:

Things you should do:	Things you shouldn't do:
• To help prevent/reduce the swelling keep your hand raised (elevated) in a sling or on pillows - ideally with your hand above the level of your heart. • Take the recommended medication to relieve the pain (see below).This can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Follow the instructions on the packet/bottle carefully. • Keep the rest of your hand/ wrist moving normally.	• Wear any rings on your hand until it is completely better. • Miss any appointments you may have been given • Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have good movement in your finger/thumb

What should I take for Pain?

Painkillers, such as Paracetamol, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then. They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you don't take any other product containing Paracetamol. **With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully**.	**Anti-inflammatory painkillers** (like Ibuprofen**)** can also be used. These relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you shouldn't use them. Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either. If you have been advised not to take Ibuprofen in the past or are on any blood thinning tablets then avoid Ibuprofen. You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with the gel, however, the amount of the drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel. Don't use gel on broken skin.

If you are at all concerned about your injury, please contact the relevant Emergency Department/Minor Injury Unit (MIU):
Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056
Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073
Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU 01443 802353
GUH: 01633 493287
Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318

Please Remember:

If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not improved within 10 days, we advise you to contact your GP, or self-refer to your local physiotherapy department or return to the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen.

Physio self-referral link:
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Physiotherapy Service (wales.nhs.uk)

If you are unable to do this electronically you should call 0300 3732539 between 8.30am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

Reference: Wrist, hand and finger problems - Muscle, bone and joint injuries | NHS inform

This document is available in Welsh/
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg