

## **Injury/wound to Finger/thumb 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 it's 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/hands as soon as possible especially for simple things e.g. eating/dressing, as it can make them stronger and so help your finger/hand back to full function, flexibility and strength.

As each day goes by, you should be able to move your hand/fingers 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 hand/fingers more - exercise really helps you hand. Do whatever you normally would and stay at or return to work - this is important and is the best way to get better unless specifically told not to.

### **How to tell if you're exercising at the right level**

When doing exercise you should listen to your pain levels, especially in the early stages. You may find that these exercises increase your symptoms slightly in the beginning. However, they should get easier over time. It can be helpful to rate your pain out of 10 (0 being no pain and 10 being the worst pain you have ever had), for example:

**Green** 1 to 3 - mild pain

**Amber** 4 to 6 - moderate pain

**Red** 7 to 10 - severe pain

Aim to keep your pain within a rating of 0 to 5. If your pain gets above this level, you can change the exercises by:

reducing the number of times, you do a movement

reducing the speed of a movement

increasing rest time between movements

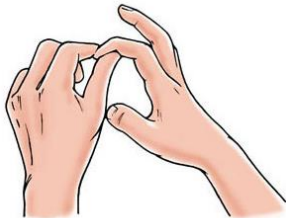
Take regular pain relief – this can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops – and follow the instructions on the packet/bottle. If the pain gets progressively worse see your GP.

### 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 a 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



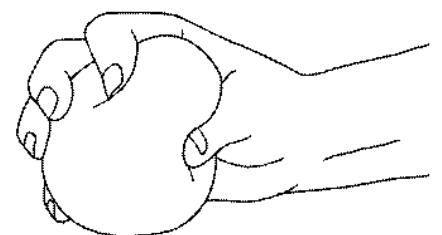
as you can – Stretch only until you feel tightness.

- 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest for the first 24/48 hours after your injury using your finger/thumb as little as possible, but do move/use them gently, especially for simple things like eating/dressing.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Keep the rest of your hand/ wrist moving normally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear any rings on your hand until it is completely better.</li> <li>• Miss any appointments you may have been given</li> <li>• Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have good movement in your finger/thumb</li> </ul>

## What should I take for Pain?

<p>Painkillers, such as <b>Paracetamol</b>, 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.</p> <p><b>With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the</b></p>	<p><b>Anti-inflammatory painkillers</b> (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. 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</p>
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**packet or bottle  
carefully.**

less than with tablets and it is important that  
you use enough gel. Don't use gel on broken  
skin.

**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: [abuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/a-z-of-  
services/physiotherapy/bone-joint-muscle-physiotherapy-services-musculoskeletal](https://abuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/a-z-of-services/physiotherapy/bone-joint-muscle-physiotherapy-services-musculoskeletal)

If you are unable to do this electronically you should call

**01495 768715 between 8.30am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday.**

**References:**

Wrist, hand and finger problems - Muscle, bone and joint injuries | NHS inform  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains/>

**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**