

## What is it?

A hand fracture is a break in a bone in the hand (metacarpal fracture) or fingers (phalanx fracture). Sometimes, a break is obvious. Other times there may not be much pain. All fractures are diagnosed with a bone X-ray.

Your treatment will depend on the type and location of the fracture. Treatment may include:

- Wearing a cast, splint or buddy straps for a while.
- Surgery, if you have a more serious fracture or a fracture that does not line up properly.

## What will my GP do now?

If you have a simple fracture, your GP may apply a cast, splint, buddy strap or brace to support the bones while they heal. Your GP may give you some gentle hand exercises to start with. They may refer you to a physiotherapist or hand clinic for follow-up review and treatment.

If you have a more serious fracture, or a fracture that does not line up properly, your GP may refer you for review by a specialist hand surgeon. You may need surgery to re-align and stabilise the fracture. You may need to have small metal devices, such as wires or pins inserted, to hold the pieces of fractured bone in place.

After surgery, you may have to wear a splint or cast for a while to protect the fracture. Your doctor will tell you when it is safe to begin gentle exercises after surgery.

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may order a second set of X-rays, 1 to 2 weeks later. They will make sure the bones are healing in the proper position.

The length of time for healing varies and depends largely on the type and location of the fracture.

Your hand and fingers may become stiff when you have a cast or splint on for a long time. Your GP, or another healthcare professional, will give you special exercises to help with stiffness and mobility.

Sometimes, you may still have stiffness or loss of motion after your cast or splint is removed. If this happens, your doctor may refer you to a hand surgeon. You may need surgery to help restore motion and/or function to your finger or fingers.

## What can I do?

Do gentle exercises as directed by your doctor or physiotherapist.

Visit your GP if you have:

- Any problem with your cast, for example, if it is too tight or if it has cracks
- Dropped any object down inside your cast
- Prolonged numbness or tingling, like pins and needles in your fingers, or you can't move them
- Fingers that turn blue, or white, or feel cold
- Increased swelling or pain in the arm with the cast
- A burning sensation under the cast
- Symptoms of infection such as a fever, chills, fatigue or pain

### Other useful factsheets

**These Health Resource Directory factsheets can help you care for your cast and recover:**

- Mallet splints
- Caring for your cast
- Exercises for arm and hand casts

# Hand Fractures

## What supports are available?

### Public

#### South Western Sydney Local Health District Hand Clinic (district-wide except Bankstown)

Your GP can refer you for an appointment in the private rooms of a specialist doctor who works in the Hand Clinic. Any surgical procedures and follow-up care will be at no cost. Your specialist can then refer you to the Hand Clinic for any surgical procedures and follow-up care at no cost.

Bankstown residents will be referred to a private specialist, who can then arrange surgery at Bankstown Hospital if necessary.

### Private

You can ask your GP for a referral to a private orthopaedic surgeon specialising in hand injuries.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How long do I need to wear a cast?
- Do I need to have surgery?
- Can I take any medication for the pain?
- Do I need to see a physiotherapist?
- Do I need to see a specialist for hand therapy?
- What if I have a problem with my splint or cast?

## Where can I learn more?

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons – hand fractures: [orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://orthoinfo.aaos.org)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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