Orthopaedic Connection

It Just Might Be A Mallet Finger!

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

What in the world is Mallet Finger? It is not a finger that has been struck by a mallet. If that happens to you, you will probably say a few choice words!
Well, I have an idea it is not what you think.

Jeopardy
An injured finger that droops at the outer joint and can’t be straightened.
What is _________ a mallet finger?

How You Get It
Something strikes the end of the finger and forces it sharply downward. Then ouch – the extensor tendon on top of the finger ruptures. Dang, you look at the end of your finger and try as you will, it won’t straighten.
Don’t wait a few weeks as most people do thinking it will get better.
It won’t. Trust me.
Surgeons don’t like to see these injuries late as valuable healing time has been lost.

What Is It?
The extensor tendon on top of your finger ruptures and pulls away from the bone, sometimes pulling a piece of bone with it. It is then impossible to straighten the finger tip.

Diagnosis
It is diagnosed primarily by examination of the finger. Always take an x-ray so as not to miss a fracture that may be present.

If Not Treated
Without treatment your finger is headed for trouble. Your finger tip over time will be permanently flexed or bent.
Every time you reach in your pocket the tip of your finger gets in the way and you may swear!

Treatment
If the tendon is ruptured and there is no fracture, it is treated with a special splint that holds the tip of the finger straight. Typically it takes at least six to eight weeks to get initial healing of the tendon.
If there is a broken piece of bone present, sometimes surgery is needed to repair the injury with metal pins.

What Else?
All too often these hand injuries are seen too late (weeks) and when an x-ray is taken a fracture along with the drooping finger is found.
That makes treatment really difficult. It can result in permanent deformity of the finger even if treated.
**Key point:** Early diagnosis and treatment of the finger usually results in a successful outcome.

*My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.*

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Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

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