

## **MERCY Injury Unit**

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## **PIL – Finger and thumb Injury Advice**

### **What is a soft tissue injury?**

The term 'soft tissue' refers to muscles, ligaments and tendons that move and/or support our joints. An injury to these structures is called a 'soft tissue injury'.

### **What are the symptoms of a soft tissue injury to the wrist and hand?**

The most common symptoms include pain, swelling, bruising, heat, stiffness and weakness which can result in reduced function.

### **How long will it take for a soft tissue injury of the hand and wrist to heal?**

This varies depending on injury severity usually It can take up to 6 weeks to fully heal.

### **How is a soft tissue injury of the hand and wrist treated?**

Most people will make a full recovery. Early appropriate management of the injury can improve healing times and return to normal activities. Regular over the counter pain medication in the first few days' post injury can help reduce pain and improve movement. Eat 5 portions of Fruit and vegetables every day. Vitamin C helps to reduce pain, inflammation, complications and improve healing!

Remove any rings on your injured finger(s) as soon as possible. Allow appropriate rest for the first few days after your injury can allow the finger and thumb to heal. Your healthcare provider may buddy strap your injured finger to the finger next to it. It is important to wean off the splint /buddy strapping as the pain eases.

**Ice:** Ice therapy can reduce pain and reduce excessive swelling in the wrist and hand. Apply ice to the injured area for 10 minutes every 2-3 hours. **DO NOT** apply ice directly to the skin. Place at least 2 layers of damp towelling between your skin and the ice.


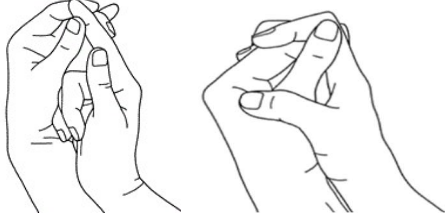



Alternatively contrast bathing of the injured wrist can also be effective. Fill 1 basin with warm water and another basin with icy water. Place your hand in the warm water for 45 seconds and the cold water for 15 seconds, continue this for 10 minutes.

You may be provided with a collar and cuff to wear for 3-4 days after your injury. Ensure your hand is positioned higher than your elbow, this will help to drain swelling from the injured area. Place your hand up on cushions or pillows when sitting.  
weeks.

### **What can I do to help myself recover from a soft tissue injury of the finger and thumb?**

Exercises are a crucial part in the successful return to normal daily activities and sport. Exercises can begin as early as possible and then can increase gradually.

**The following exercises should be performed 3 times each day:**

<p>1. Rest your forearm and hand on a table. Curl your fingers and try to get your fingertips touching your palm. Hold for 5 seconds. Then straighten your fingers out and try to touch the table you're your nails, hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times.</p> 	<p>2. Support the middle of your finger, bend and straighten the tip of your finger, repeat 10 times. Then support the bottom of your finger and bend and straighten the middle joint, repeat 10 times.</p> 
<p>3. Touch the index fingertip with the tip of the thumb, then slide the thumb to the bottom of the index finger. Repeat 5 times on each finger.</p> 	<p>4. Place your hand flat on a table, slide your thumb out to the side as far as comfortable, repeat 10 times.</p> 
<p>5. Practice pinching a small object between your thumb and index finger, hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times. Practice gripping a stress ball or wringing a cloth, hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.</p>	

**When can I return to normal activity?**

After 72 hours it's important to start using your hand and fingers for light day to day activities. As the pain decreases you can start to gradually increase your activity.

**When can I return to work and/or sport?**

If your job involves a lot of hand activity, try to practice similar tasks at home to build up your strength and confidence prior to returning to work.

If you play sport, you should not return until you feel your strength and movement are back to normal. It is important to practice any aspect of the sport yourself (e.g., throwing) at home prior to returning to any training or matches. Discuss with a chartered physiotherapist if you have any worries about return to work or play.

**Do I require any further treatment?**

The vast majority of wrist and hand injuries will heal by following the advice in this leaflet. In some cases, the doctor or physiotherapist may arrange to see you again.

**If after 3 weeks, you feel you have not improved then contact your GP or  
The Mercy Injury Unit – Gurrabraher 8 am to 6 pm Mon – Sun. Telephone: (021) 4926900**