



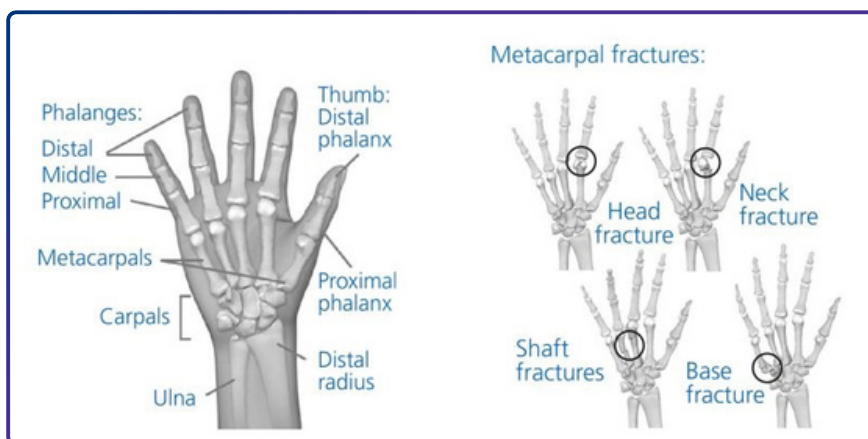
# Hand fractures

## Metacarpal fractures



### The injury

You have fractured (broken) one of the bones in your hand called the metacarpal. It is a common injury, often occurring when falling onto the hand or punching an object.



### Symptoms

Common symptoms include:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Difficulty moving the fingers (stiffness)
- Deformity at the injury site, such as a prominent lump on the bone. This is unlikely to affect the function of your hand

### Treatment

The aim of treatment is to restore movement to your hand whilst protecting the injured bone. Treatment may include:

- A custom-made splint to support the injured bone
- Taping or strapping your injured finger to an adjacent finger

## Exercise to restore movement

Whilst wearing your splint or wearing your buddy strapping, it is important to exercise the fingers to prevent stiffness.

Exercises should be completed regularly, approximately four times daily.

Your therapist will advise you on specific exercises for your injury, and will progress these as your recovery progresses.

## Swelling management

Swelling to the injury site is normal after the injury, however this can make it difficult to move your fingers. Elevating the hand, exercising the fingers and applying a compression bandage may help to reduce your swelling.

## Recovery expectations

It can take four to six weeks for the bone to heal but many more weeks for the fracture to be strong enough to tolerate gripping and lifting or sporting activities.

Everyone's recovery is different but the following time frames can be used as a guide:

- **0-4 weeks:** Wear your splint or buddy strapping all the time. With the unaffected fingers, complete light function such as eating and typing.
- **4-6 weeks:** Wear your splint or buddy strapping for protection and comfort only. You can start to use your hand without the splint or buddy taping, for light function as tolerated.
- **6-8 weeks:** Carry out normal day to day tasks but avoid sport or heavy activities. You no longer need to wear your splint.
- **8 weeks onwards:** Return to sport and heavier activities as tolerated.

Speak to your therapist about specific activities if you are unsure.

## Contact details

Hand Therapy Unit, Ground Floor, Building F, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.  
Telephone: 9231 3805

Information produced by the Hand Therapy Unit, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

Date reviewed: Feb 2025 Next review date: Feb 2029



Better and  
fairer care.  
**Always.**