

Virtual fracture clinic

Tuft fracture

Information for patients, families and carers

What is a fracture?

You have 27 bones within your hand and wrist. Any one of these bones can be fractured (or broken) when a force is applied.

Fractures can be:

- simple (just two fragments) or multi-part (more than two fragments)
- open (breaking through the skin) or closed (the skin remains intact)
- undisplaced (the bone fragments have remained in position) or displaced (the bone fragments have shifted position)
- stable (the bone fragments are unlikely to change position) or unstable (the bone fragments have the potential to change position)

Fractures can also occur in conjunction with injuries to other tissues, such as damage to tendons, muscles, nerves and blood vessels.

A break is the same as a fracture

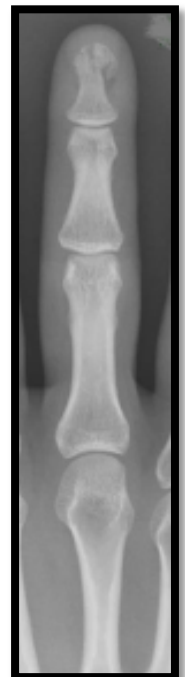
What is a tuft fracture?

A tuft fracture refers to a fracture or break through the very tip of the bone that sits under the fingernail (distal phalanx). This can occur with a crush injury, such as when a finger is accidentally caught in a closing door.

What are the signs and symptoms of a tuft fracture?

Most people will notice that the finger or thumb tip is swollen and tender to touch. You may also have some bruising and you might find it difficult to bend the finger or thumb. In some cases the skin or the nail will break or may become bruised.

An x-ray should be taken to confirm the presence of a fracture and to check the position of the bones.



What treatments available for a tuft fracture?

Most tuft fractures are successfully treated without any hospital input and will heal within four to eight weeks. It is normal to experience pain and discomfort during this time and it may take several more months for the swelling and tenderness to completely resolve and to feel like you have full strength and flexibility in your hand.

When can I return to work and sport after a tuft fracture?

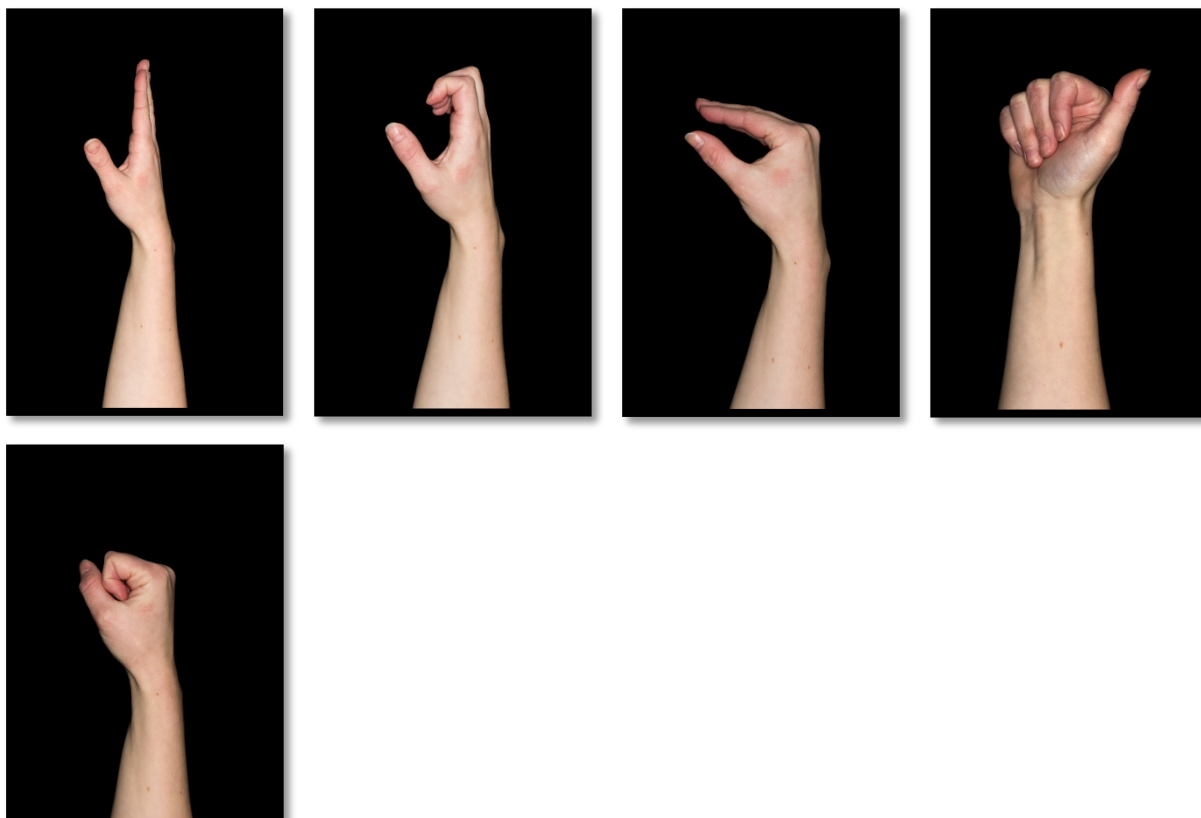
You should avoid any heavy gripping, pulling and pushing for the first six weeks after your injury but you can use your hand immediately for light activities such as eating / drinking / dressing / typing and light housework. You should avoid contact sports and heavy manual work until eight to 12 weeks after the injury.

If you require a Statement of Fitness to Work (sick note) you should contact your GP and ensure you take all of your hospital documentation with you. For more information, visit <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1062.aspx>

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

You should move all the joints of the affected finger to ensure this does not become stiff. You cannot do any harm by moving the finger although it may feel uncomfortable. You should try to use your hand as normally as possible for light activities. **Do not** do any heavy lifting or pulling.

To avoid stiffness and to optimise the return of movement, perform the exercises below five to ten times, five times each day:



Who can I contact for more information?

Please look at our website which has educational material for patients and professionals

www.londonvirtualfractureclinic.co.uk

Please note the phone line is open **Wednesday mornings** only.

From: 9:00am to 11:00am

Please call: 02033125990

Or email: VirtualFractureClinic@imperial.nhs.uk

To speak to someone about hand therapy appointments

Please telephone 0203311 0333

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at pals@imperial.nhs.uk. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

Complaints department
Fourth floor
Salton House
St Mary's Hospital
Praed Street
London W2 1NY