

Knowing about your fractured metacarpal bone in the hand



A metacarpal bone fracture is a break in one of the five long bones in the hand. The metacarpal bones connect the wrist to the fingers and main part of the hand (see diagram).

Common signs of a broken metacarpal bone are severe pain in the hand, swelling, difficulty gripping and after a while, bruising of the area. Very occasionally parts of the injured hand may feel numb or cold if the blood supply to the hand has been damaged.

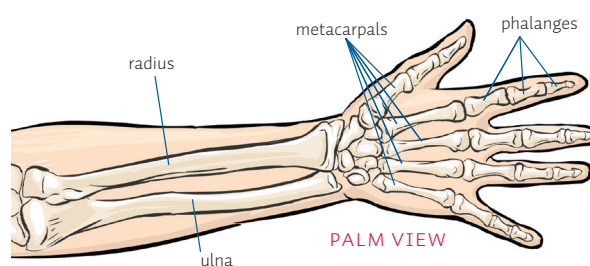
After an x-ray to check which bone is broken, it is common for the injured hand to have a strapping, a splint or a plaster cast to hold it in the correct position so the bone heals properly. If the break is complicated or severe, surgery may be needed to put the bones back in the correct position.

Initial phase

- See a health professional early.
- Discuss your diagnosis and treatment plan.
- Ask what pain medication is right for you.
- Tell them about the jobs and activities you do at home and work – these may need to be changed initially.
- Get advice about what you can do at home to help your recovery.
- Contact ACC as soon as possible if you are given a medical certificate for time off work.

Early rehabilitation phase

- Ask about other treatment options such as an exercise programme set by a physiotherapist or hand therapist.
- Depending on the type of job or activities you do, your health professional may suggest alternative work duties. If your job involves heavy lifting or the use of two hands, these duties may need to be temporarily changed.
- If time off work is recommended, it is important you work with your health professional, employer and ACC to develop a safe and manageable return to work plan.
- Discuss any worries or concerns with your health professional.



Ongoing rehabilitation and prevention

- Ask your health professional about a programme of specific exercises to strengthen the muscles in your injured hand.
- If your hand strength and flexibility is not improving after four to eight weeks you may need a review of your rehabilitation plan or referral to an orthopaedic specialist.
- If you play a contact sport check with your health professional or coach about protection for your hand before you take part again.
- If your job involves heavy manual work, talk to your employer about hand protection equipment.
- Ask about other rehabilitation options available to help your recovery.
- If you have had more than one fracture in 12 months, your bones may be brittle. Talk to your doctor about this.

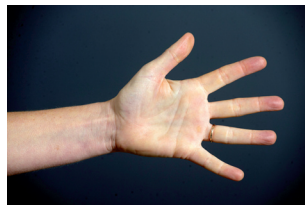
Things you can do

- Rest and elevate your injured hand at regular times during the day. This will help with pain and swelling.
- Take the pain medication advised by your health professional.
- Keep active and maintain general body fitness.
- Keep doing the hand exercises recommended by your health professional once the strapping/splint or plaster cast is removed.
- See your health professional immediately if your injured hand becomes very swollen, numb or cold and these symptoms don't improve after elevating your hand.

Exercises

Ask your health professional if these are right for you and how often to do them

Hand/fist: Make a fist then fan out the fingers.



Paper crumpling:

Start with palm down on a piece of paper. Keep the heel of the hand on the table surface. Crumple the paper into a ball.



Important facts

- Accurate diagnosis helps to manage your injury and speed your recovery.
- Resting your hand and wearing supportive strapping, or a splint or plaster will help the bones heal in the correct position.
- Regular use of simple painkillers, such as paracetamol will provide pain relief.
- After the strapping, splint or cast is removed physiotherapy and exercises are important to help regain strength and flexibility in your hand.
- If your injured hand feels swollen, numb or cold, you should elevate it for one to two hours. If this does not help, you must see a doctor immediately.

Everyone has a role to play

... in supporting your return to activity including work.

You

You can help speed your recovery by carefully following your health professional's advice. Contact ACC if your doctor gives you a medical certificate for time off work so that support can be arranged as soon as possible.



Your workplace

Your employer can help you with a rehabilitation plan. This may involve restricted hours or different tasks so you can get back to work. Your employer should get in touch with ACC as soon as they can.



Your Health Professional

Your doctor will give you advice and treatment, or referral for treatment, if required. They can also help you plan how you will get better and may check on your progress if needed.



ACC

ACC can provide you with information, support and guidance throughout your recovery. They will talk to your employer and health professional about ACC programmes that can help you get back to work as soon as you are able.



Your family

Your family and whanau can help you with everyday tasks and give you support and encouragement to look after yourself and get better. As long as you are following the advice of a registered health professional they can be sure you are in good hands.

It's good to stay active



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