

## 5<sup>th</sup> Metacarpal Fractures

### Information for patients

#### What is a 5<sup>th</sup> metacarpal fracture?

Your hand is made up of 5 metacarpal bones which connect your fingers and thumb to your wrist. A 5<sup>th</sup> metacarpal fracture (also known as a boxer's fracture) is a break in the bone which connects your little finger to your wrist. A break is the same as a fracture.



#### What causes a 5th metacarpal fracture?

These fractures usually occur when there is direct impact between a hand that is closed (i.e. Fist) and a firm object, such as a wall or the ground. 5<sup>th</sup> metacarpal fractures are the most commonly occurring fractures of the hand.

#### What are my treatment options?

Most 5<sup>th</sup> metacarpal injuries are managed successfully without the need for surgery. Even in cases where the alignment of the bone fragments is disrupted, the bone usually heals without any long term consequences.

The options for non-surgical management are:

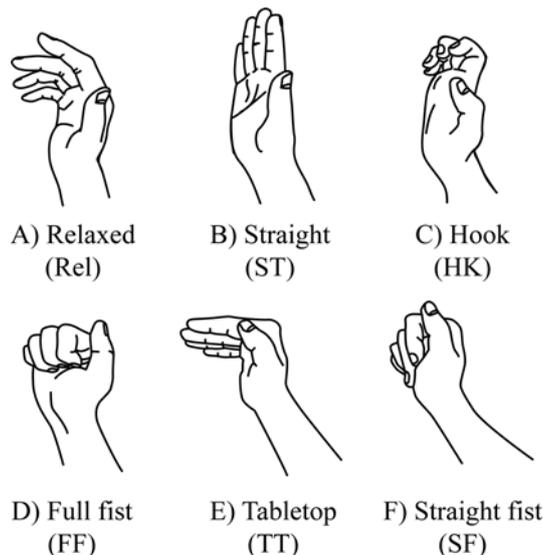
- 'Buddy strap' the little finger to the ring finger for 2-4 weeks and move it as pain allows
- Support the hand in a plaster cast or plastic splint initially and then move as able once removed.

If this is the decision for your type of fracture you will be directly discharged from clinic and advised to resume normal activities as able. You will be contacted by telephone by a nurse who works alongside the consultant in VFC and informed of this.

If the consultant has any concerns regarding your fracture you will have an appointment arranged at fracture clinic where you will discuss your options face-to-face with a doctor. You will be contacted regarding this following VFC.

### Is there anything I can do to help myself?

- Simple painkillers, such as paracetamol or anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen, can help manage pain and swelling. Please speak to your local pharmacist if you are unsure as to which medications you can safely use.
- Once you have been advised of when to move your strapping/ splint, it is important to begin moving your injured part and resume daily activities in order to promote bone healing and restore full function in your hand. Below are a few simple exercises for you to begin in order to regain movement and flexibility of the hand / fingers. You should carry these out regularly throughout the day e.g. 5-10 x 5 reps each.



### What is the usual outcome following a 5<sup>th</sup> metacarpal fracture?

Most 5<sup>th</sup> metacarpal fractures heal without any problems. You should begin to move as early as possible but it may take some time before you regain full strength of your affected hand. Occasionally, the 'knuckle' of your 5<sup>th</sup> finger may be less prominent than prior to your injury but this should not interfere with your ability to use your hand.

### When I can return to sport / work?

You should avoid heavy lifting, pushing or pulling in the first few weeks after injury and then gradually introduce this into your daily activities. You should avoid contact sports and heavy manual work until you feel you have full mobility and strength in your hand.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you require any further information you can contact us on the details below:

Fracture clinic (Clinic 3)

Outpatient department

Altnagelvin Hospital

Tel: 02871 345171      Ext: 213637