

Metacarpal fractures (Non-displaced)

Fact Sheet

Information contained in this fact sheet is a guideline for care only. Please consult with your doctor or health professional to make sure that this information is right for you.

Your fracture

You have sustained a simple fracture to a bone in your hand near the knuckle.

Your injury has been assessed as not requiring specialist orthopaedic care. You will likely make a good recovery.

Treatment

For simple metacarpal fractures, usual treatment is either:

- “buddy strapping” – the closest finger to the fracture will be “buddy” strapped to your next largest finger. You can remove the strapping to wash or if it gets dirty, but keep reapplying the tape for 2 – 3 weeks or until no longer painful. The strapping should be firm but not too tight (so it doesn’t affect blood flow).
- A “backslab” or partial cast to immobilise the affected area and minimise pain during the healing process. Make a plan with your GP or treating clinician for your cast to be removed after 2 – 3 weeks.

Keep your strapping dry to avoid skin irritation. Change the strapping if it becomes wet.

Follow the instructions on cast care provided to you.

Healing Timeframe

- A simple metacarpal fracture usually heals very well
- For a simple metacarpal fracture, on average total healing can take 3 – 4 weeks
If after 6 weeks you still have pain, swelling or difficulty moving your finger, please see your GP for advice.

Getting Back to Normal

- Make sure to move your hand and fingers as soon as possible (as pain allows) to prevent stiffness. This may cause some discomfort but is important as the injury is close to the joint
- Elevate your hand when sitting to relieve swelling

- Gradually resume daily activities as pain allows
- It may take 6 weeks or longer for your hand to return to normal and regain grip strength
- A lump may form at the injury site and the knuckle may not appear as prominent or obvious; this can unfortunately be a permanent feature but will not affect your function.

Pain Relief and Comfort

Regular pain relief such as paracetamol can be used.

When can I...?

Play sport	As pain allows. Buddy strap on return to sport
Lift heavy items	After 6 weeks
Return to work	Consult your doctor
Drive	Consult your doctor

The above timeframes are a guide only and do not apply to all metacarpal fractures.

Worries or concerns

For any immediate concerns or questions regarding your injury please contact:

- Your General Practitioner (GP).
They are able to speak directly to an Orthopaedic team at Redcliffe Hospital or Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital if required.
- 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for health advice, triage and referral from a registered nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and at the cost of a local call. 13 HEALTH provides access to interpreting services for callers not confident with English.

In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).

