

Fingertip injuries are one of the more common injuries in the hand. The fingertips are exposed in many of our activities.

Causes

Fingertip injuries can be caused by many things. They can be crushed, closed in a door, or hit by a hammer. A heavy object can be dropped onto the finger. They can also be cut by a kitchen knife, power tool or another sharp object. A fingertip injury can result in damage to the skin, bone, nailbed, tendons and the pulp, the padded area of the fingertip (see Figure 1). You can also damage the nerve endings in the fingertips.

Treatment

Your doctor will ask you how the injury occurred. He or she will check for good blood supply and make sure you can still bend and straighten the finger. An x-ray may be taken to see if the bone is broken.

Treatment of a fingertip injury depends on the severity. Some treatment options can include:

- Dressing (gauze, tape, sterile pad, etc.)
- Splints or metal pins
- Surgery
- Amputation

Here are examples of some injuries and how they may be treated:

- **Severe crushing of the fingertip:** If just skin is removed from the fingertip or if there is just a little bit of bone exposed at the fingertip, this injury can be treated with a simple dressing. If the injury is more serious, surgery may be needed.
- **Broken finger bone:** This is very common. This can be treated with a splint or temporary metal pins to hold the bone fragments in proper position. If the damage is too severe, amputation of the fingertip may be necessary.
- **Injured nail bed:** If blood is collecting under the nail, it may be drained by making a small hole in the nail. If the nail bed is more seriously injured, you may need a splint or even surgery.

Recovery

Your finger may be sensitive for many months. Sometimes, you'll have limited feeling in the fingertip. The quality and texture of the skin may be different, and your finger will likely look different.

Talk to your doctor about the best treatment option for you.

