



Finger Dislocation

A dislocation of a joint is where the two bones are no longer aligned with each other because the ligaments that support the joint and hold the bones in place give way allowing the bones to slip out of position. Some dislocations will be associated with a fracture in the bones involved, also known as an avulsion.

Most dislocations occur after a fall or when a ball hits the end of the finger and can happen at any joint in the finger or thumb.

The bones are surrounded by many types of soft tissues including ligaments, muscles, tendons, nerves and blood vessels. Pain is generally due to trauma to these tissues.

You should visit an emergency department or a hand therapy practitioner who has expertise in fingers, hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder – to be assessed and treated. If the ligaments do not heal correctly there is a risk that the joint will become unstable and at risk of dislocating again. An unstable joint may affect the function of the finger. Early hand therapy can help to minimise this risk.

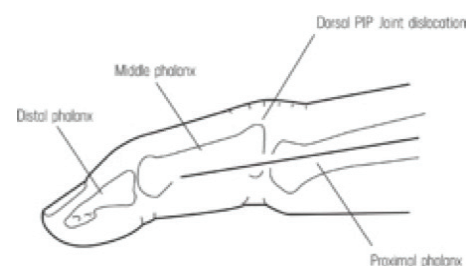
Symptoms

Symptoms may include:

- deformity or crooked finger
- pain, bruising and swelling.
- difficulty moving the finger
- feeling of instability, looseness, floppiness.

In severe cases there may be:

- changes in sensation (numbness/tingling)
- changes in the colour of the finger
- an open wound.



How can hand therapy help?

A finger dislocation may be:

1. **simple** – a dislocation that can be relocated back into position easily, or
2. **complicated** – a dislocation that may require a local or general anaesthetic to relocate back into position.

A hand therapy practitioner will assess the stability of the joint and make a custom-made splint (thermoplastic orthosis) or a cast made from plaster or fibreglass to immobilise the finger and protect the finger from further damage. They will guide suitable exercises and assist with swelling management, stiffness, wound care and scar management.

A dislocation can be a serious injury that results in residual swelling or stiffness of the joint, which could require further therapy or surgical intervention. Any dislocation where there is a fracture involving the surface of the joint is likely to have some long-term stiffness and is also at risk of developing arthritis, especially if not treated appropriately.

Recovery

Simple finger dislocations are protected with a splint for 4-6 weeks. Usually, exercise is prescribed soon after injury.

Complicated finger dislocations that involve fractures may require a period of immobilisation to ensure that the bones heal in the correct place.

Sport

Your therapist may make a playing guard in the latter part of rehabilitation if it is safe for early return to sport.



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