

# An injury to the middle joint of your finger (volar plate injury)

Emergency Department

Information for Patients

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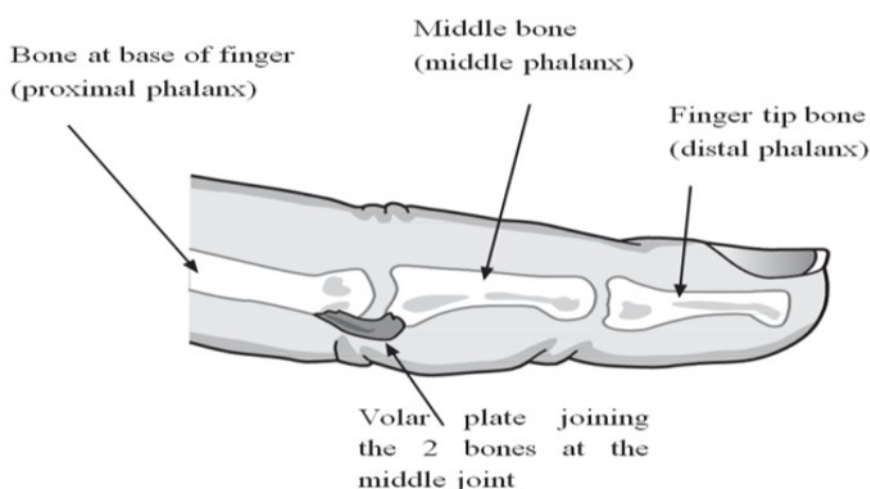
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## What is a volar plate?

The volar plate is a very thick ligament in your finger. It is on the palm side (underside, not the nail side) of the middle joint of your finger. Ligaments are tough bands of tissue that connect bones together.

The volar plate's job is to support the middle joint of the finger. It holds the 2 bones together.



## What is a volar plate injury?

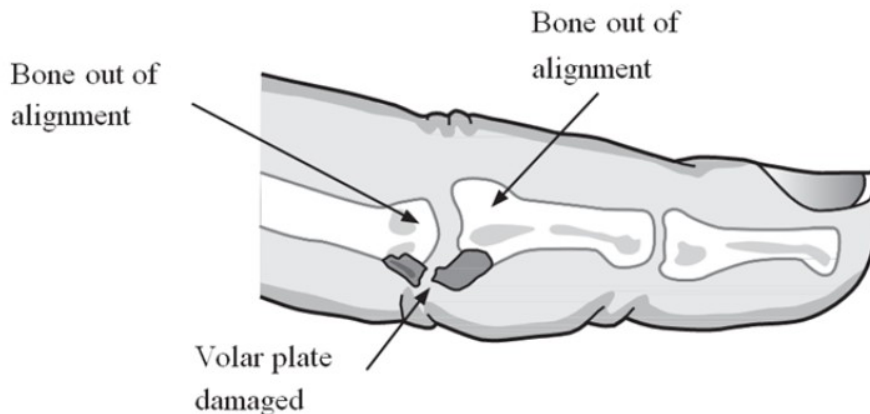
This injury usually happens when your finger is bent too far back (hyperextended). When this movement happens the volar plate is overstretched.

There are 2 types of volar plate injury (see p2). The ligament can rip or a bit of the bone can be pulled away.

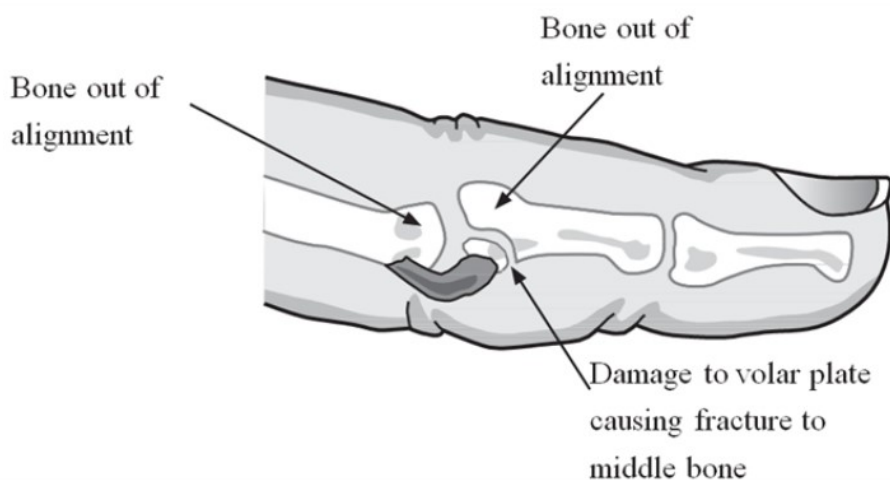
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## The two types of volar plate injury



**Volar plate injury with ligaments**



**Volar plate injury with fracture**

## How is it treated?

- You will have been put into neighbour strapping (the supportive white tape) in the emergency department.
- It is important you wear this for 2 weeks.
- Replace the strapping after a bath or shower so the wet tape does not damage your skin. Reapply the tape the same way as it was put on in the emergency department, make sure you do not put the tape over the joints, (the bits in your finger that bend), so you can still bend and straighten your fingers.
- The fracture clinic will send you a letter in the post explaining your follow up plans. If you have not heard from them by 2 weeks please contact them on : 0116 258 5430.
- Do not do sports or heavy lifting for 5 weeks after your injury.
- You may need some simple pain killers, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. Please see the pain relief leaflet 1238 for more information: [Taking pain relief for an injury after discharge from the Emergency Department](#), or search leaflet number 1238 on [yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/](http://yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/) or scan the QR code,
- It is best to take painkillers regularly for a few days, rather than every now and then, so that you can exercise the fingers.



- **You should not drive if you cannot take full control of a car in an emergency situation with the strapping on. Contact your insurance company for more information.**

## Exercises

Finger joints get very stiff very quickly. It is important to keep them moving as much as possible, even in the strapping with a new injury. Doing the exercises below will help stop the finger from becoming stiff.

Discomfort while exercising does not mean that you are further injuring the finger, it is to be expected.

Completing exercises after soaking your hand in warm water for 1 to 2 minutes can often help with the stiffness.

Do not use warm water soaks in the first 72 hours (3 days) as this can make the swelling worse.

### Exercise 1:



Bend all 3 finger joints into your palm (into a fist).

You may need to use your other hand to help if the joints are stiff.

Let go and straighten the finger back. Make sure you are also straightening the finger fully at the end.

Hold for 10 to 20 seconds Repeat 10 times 3 times a day.

### Exercise 2:



Hold your injured finger in a hook shape. You may need to use your other hand to help if the joints are stiff.

Then straighten it back. Make sure you are also straightening the finger fully at the end.

Hold for 10 to 20 seconds Repeat 10 times 3 times a day.

### Exercise 3:



With your other hand hold your finger just below the crease of the middle joint. This will stop the bottom joint from moving.

Bend the middle joint of your finger as far as you can. Then straighten it back up. Make sure you are also straightening the finger fully at the end.

Hold for 10 to 20 seconds Repeat 10 times 3 times a day.

## Exercise 4 (if needed)

If you are having problems fully straightening the finger lay your hand on a flat surface with the palm facing down. Put pressure on the middle joint from your other hand.

Hold it for 10 to 20 seconds at the point of discomfort then let go. Repeat 10 times 3 times a day.

## Swelling

You may have swelling in your finger after injury. This is quite normal.

Keep your hand raised above heart level for the first 72 hours (3 days). You can do this by resting your hand across your chest/ shoulder, using pillows, or a sling if you have one.

Use ice around the finger (wrapped in a tea towel to avoid burning the skin) for the first 72 hours. This will reduce swelling. Apply it every 3 hours for 10 minutes.

Try to avoid walking with your hand hanging down at your side for long periods, as this will make it swell more. Try to avoid this in the first few weeks if possible. You can use a sling if you have one, if not try to shorten the amount of time your hand is hanging by changing the position of your arm.

After injury, the middle joint of the finger will stay swollen for many months. The joint will often look bigger. This is due to the scar tissue which builds up as it heals. The joint should slowly get smaller over time, but may always be slightly larger than the other side. This is normal. It will not affect the movement of your finger if you do the exercises regularly.

## Contact details

Fracture Clinic (Leicester Royal Infirmary Balmoral building, level 1)

Problems with your injury: 0116 258 5430.

Appointments: 0116 258 5138.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
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Previous reference:

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