

## Advice following a fracture to your metacarpal neck (treated with buddy taping)

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You have fractured (broken) one of the bones in your hand called the metacarpal, at the part of the bone called the 'neck'.

This normally takes up to six weeks to heal. During this period, it is important that you follow the rehabilitation plan on the following pages. Following your rehabilitation plan will help to prevent further injury and help to improve your function.

The knuckle of your hand near your fracture may always look different after this injury - this will not affect how you can use your hand.

### **Completing the exercises is important to prevent your hand and fingers from becoming stiff.**

If necessary, take over-the-counter painkillers to enable you to complete your exercises.

**Buddy taping:** You have been given buddy taping for comfort and to protect your fracture while it is still healing.

**Function:** You should avoid heavy tasks with your injured hand for six weeks.

**Driving:** You can return to driving when you feel confident in comfortably, and safely controlling your vehicle. This includes being able to firmly grip the steering wheel with both hands and operate a gear stick if necessary. It is up to you to decide when this is the case. Whilst everybody is different,

this usually takes around 3 weeks from the time of injury. You do not need to tell the DVLA unless you will be unable to drive for 3 months due to your injury – this is unlikely for this type of fracture.

### **Please contact us if:**

1. If you are worried that you are unable to follow this rehabilitation plan.
2. If after six weeks you are still experiencing significant pain, swelling, or having difficulty moving your hand or fingers.
3. If you are experiencing pain or symptoms other than at the site of the original injury or surrounding area.
4. If you have any questions.

**Phone Plastics Rehabilitation (Hand Therapy) on 01392 402429.**

### **Smoking Cessation:**

Medical evidence suggests that smoking prolongs fracture healing time. In extreme cases, it can stop healing altogether. It is important that you consider this information with relation to your recent injury. Stopping smoking during the healing phase of your fracture will help ensure optimal recovery from this injury. For advice on smoking cessation and local support available, please refer to the following website: <http://smokefree.nhs.uk> or discuss this with your GP.

## Until 3 weeks post- injury:

Keep your buddy taping on at all times, only removing it to wash your hands and change the tape.

Keep your hand elevated so that your hand is higher than your elbow – this will prevent and help swelling.

Move any unaffected joints (i.e., shoulder, elbow, wrist, and any fingers which are not taped) – this will prevent stiffness and tightness.

You can gently bend and straighten all of your fingers (including those which are buddy taped) as pain allows. Again, this will prevent stiffness and tightness.

## After 3 weeks:

You should now remove your buddy taping. However, it is advisable to re-apply the tape if you will be doing any activities where your finger may get caught.

Do the following exercises regularly – every 1-2 hours



1. Bend the 'big' knuckles then straighten your fingers x 5.
2. 'Hook' the tips of all your fingers, then straighten your fingers x 5
3. Try to make a fist, then straighten your fingers x 5.



Bend your wrist forwards, backwards, and side to side x5.

Try not to use your hand too much, as it may swell and/or become more painful.

## WATCH OUT FOR:

When you bend your injured finger, if it is curling over one of your other fingers, please let us know.

If your finger looks 'wonky', let us know.

## After 4 weeks:

Continue with your exercises as above.

Start using your hand a little bit more, but if you get pain at the fracture site, or if your hand swells, this means you have done too much, so rest and elevate your hand. Gradually resume your normal activities as pain allows.

You may be able to start the following exercises if your hand is not too painful:



1. Push the big knuckles down using your other hand while curling your fingers in.
2. Push on the tips of your fingers to make them bend more.
3. Push on all your fingers together using your other hand to make a full fist.

## At 8 weeks:

Your fracture should be almost healed, but not strong.

Complete normal activities.

Heavier or more strenuous tasks, including heavy lifting, may still be difficult and cause discomfort and swelling at this stage.

If your hand feels weak, try the following exercises:

Use a sponge ball or something similar like rolled-up socks or a rolled-up towel to squeeze.

Open and close your hand with an elastic band around your fingers and thumb.

Avoid heavy activities and sport until 8-10 weeks.

## At 12 weeks:

Return to contact sports. Symptoms will continue to improve over the next few months.

You should no longer need to buddy tape your fingers for normal activities. However, you may choose to for high-risk activities such as heavy manual work and contact sports.

If you are still experiencing significant pain and/or stiffness please contact us for further advice/management.

**Phone Plastics Rehabilitation (Hand Therapy) on: 01392 402429.**

## Buddy taping advice:

You should buddy tape your fingers as demonstrated to you in the clinic and as shown below.

Change the buddy taping every 1 – 2 days.

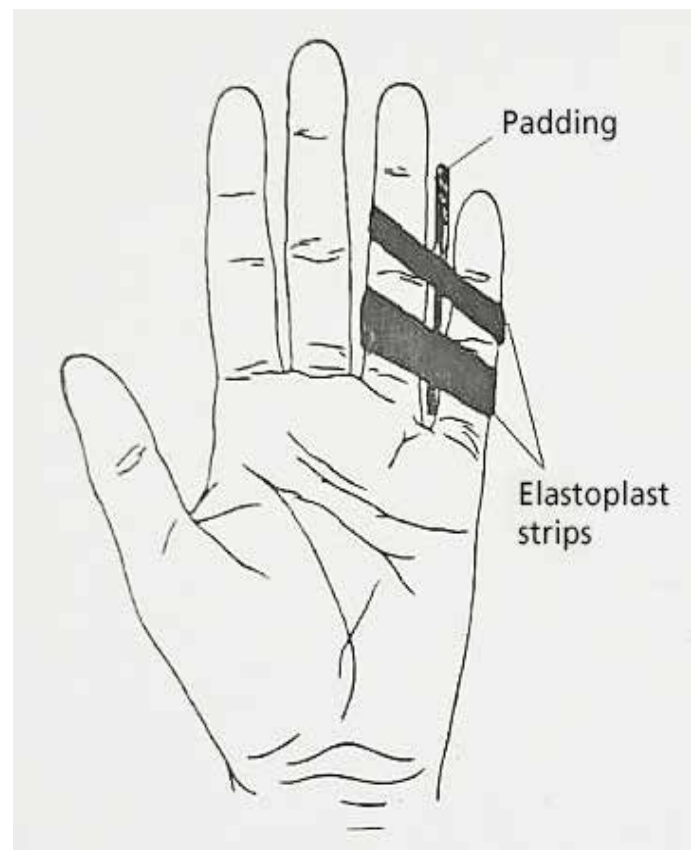
Instructions:

1. Carefully remove the tape and gauze.
2. Wash your hands gently - keeping the two fingers together.

3. Thoroughly dry your hands. This helps the tape stick.

4. Place a piece of gauze between the two fingers you have been shown to tape together. This helps to absorb sweat and stop them from rubbing against each other – which can be sore.

5. Apply two pieces of tape to secure the fingers together. Do this between the skin creases so you can still bend and straighten the fingers (as shown in the picture). Apply the tape firmly but not so tight as to cut off your circulation. Do not let your fingers twist or overlap each other.



Tip: cutting your tape in half lengthways can make it easier to apply between the skin creases, stopping it from blocking your movement.

Do not let the gauze or tape get wet.

If you have a reaction to the tape, remove it and contact us.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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