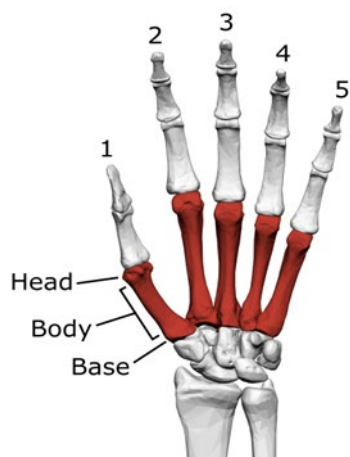


Looking after a child with a metacarpal fracture

Information for parents and carers



The metacarpals are the long bones of the hand. Each hand has five metacarpals, one for the thumb and each finger. A metacarpal fracture is a crack or break to one of these bones.

These fractures are usually caused by a fall or direct blow to the hand. Too much force is put on the bone(s), causing a fracture. This often occurs with injuries like being hit on the hand with a hockey stick, falling directly onto the hand or knuckle, or punching a wall.

Treatment

The x-ray will tell us the type and location of the fracture. Sometimes the bones have moved apart from each other or twisted and will require to be put into a better position in the Emergency Department or Theatre.

How we treat the bones in your child's hand depends on how bad the fracture is. Sometimes we need to put them in a cast to make sure the fracture doesn't move position. If it is just a small crack, we may use a splint or tape up your child's fingers.

Pain is usually at its worst in the first few days through the first week. Your child will be much more comfortable when they are placed in a cast or splint, but we would recommend regular painkillers such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen over the first few days.

Hand fractures can often swell, so it is very important to keep the arm raised (hand above heart). Elevating the hand like this helps keep swelling from drifting down and getting stuck in the fingers. A good way to keep the arm raised is to put it on a pillow with the fingers pointed up.

Follow-up

Most of these fractures heal well without any problems and we do not routinely follow them up. We recommend you remove the cast or splint in 2-3 weeks. Your child's hand may be a bit stiff & sore when it is removed.

If you have any ongoing concerns regarding your child's hand, please contact the Emergency Department on 0131 312 007/8 and ask for a review clinic appointment.