

Extensor Tendon Injuries of the Hand



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Extensor tendons allow you to straighten your fingers. These tendons attach to muscles in your lower arm and extend just under the skin on the back of your hands and fingers. The tendons are easily injured because they are so close to the surface of the skin.

Signs of injury

Pain and problems with straightening one or more joints in the finger are the most common signs of injury to the tendon.

Common injuries

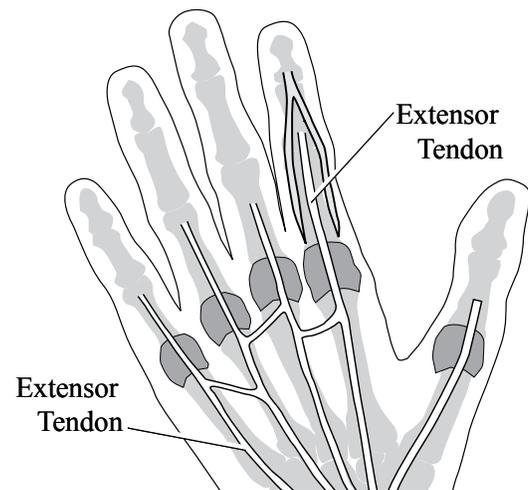
Injuries to the extensor tendons are most often caused by cuts on the back of the hand or fingers and jammed fingers. The tendons may be cut or pulled away from the bone.

Extensor Tendon Disruption

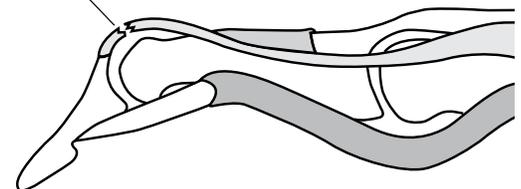
If the injury is to the last finger joint, it can cause the finger tip to droop, or not straighten. This is called a **mallet finger**.

Tendon Disruption Over a Joint

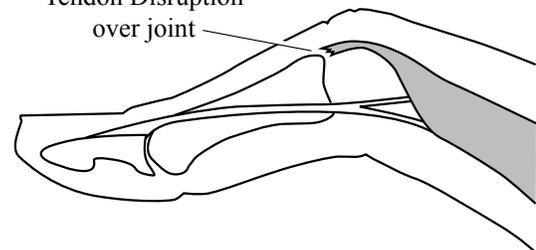
If the injury is to the middle joint of the finger, it can cause the middle bone of the finger to bend and the end joint to bend backwards. This is called a **boutonniere deformity**.



Extensor Tendon Disruption



Tendon Disruption over joint

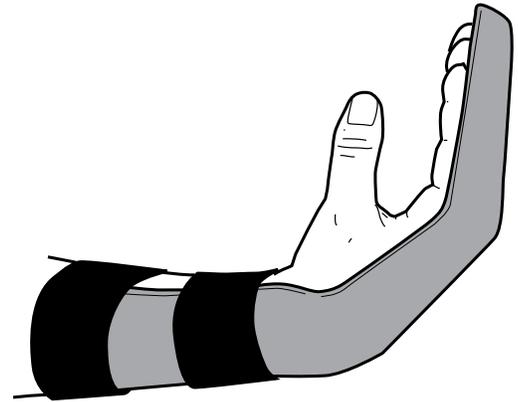


Treatment

Based on the injury, treatment may include:

- Stitches for cut tendons
- Splinting to limit movement and allow healing
- Hand therapy after healing

The size and extent of the splint is based on the type of injury. Wear the splint as directed by your doctor and therapist or the tendon may not heal properly. Most often the splint is to be worn at all times for at least 4 to 8 weeks.



Healing and recovery

Treatment can return use of the tendon. As the tendon heals, it may attach itself to the bone, limiting motion. Scar tissue also forms as a part of the healing process. The scar tissue may limit full bending or straightening of the joint. Hand therapy may improve motion. In some cases, more surgery may be needed to remove scar tissue.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.