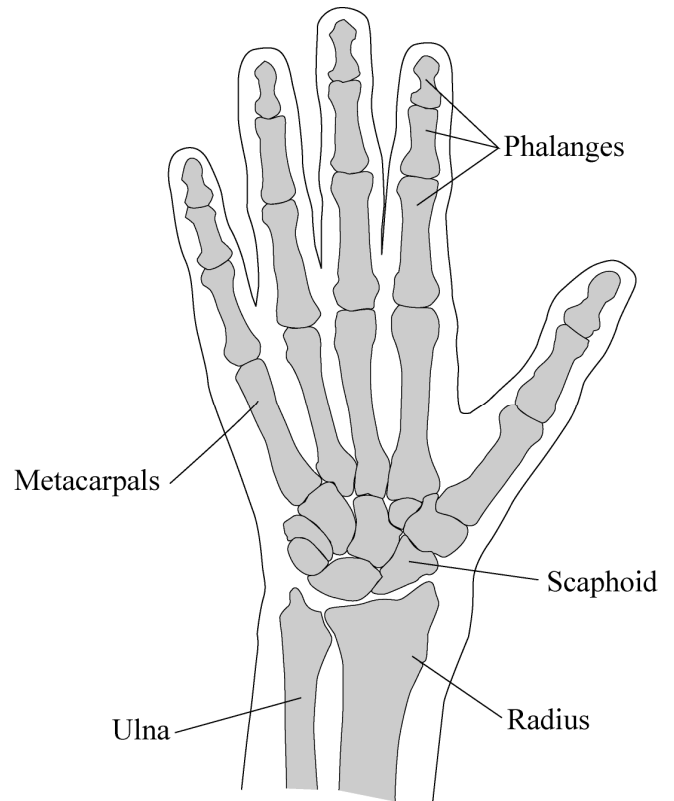


# Hand Fractures

The hand is made up of many bones called metacarpals and phalanges. A **fracture**, also called a **broken bone**, can happen when there is force against a bone such as from a fall or accident.

A fracture may be called:

- A **simple fracture** – the bone pieces are in place
- An **unstable fracture** – the bone pieces are out of place or the bone may be in many pieces
- A **compound or open fracture** – the bone breaks and comes through the skin making it more at risk for infection



## Signs of a Fracture

You may have one or more of these signs:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Loss of motion or strength
- A crooked finger

More on next page →

Learn more about your health care.

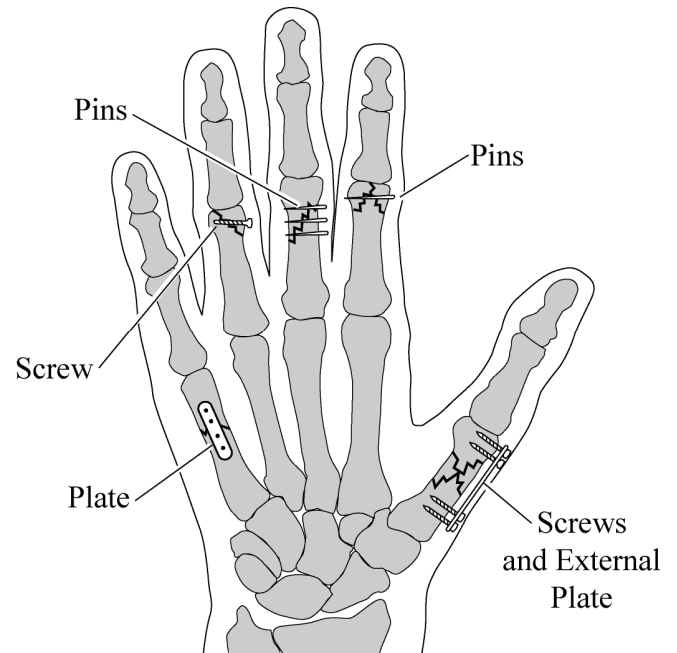
## Treatment

Your doctor will do an exam and will order x-rays to see if there is a fracture. Treatment will be based on the type of fracture.

For a simple fracture, a splint or cast may be used to protect the bone until it heals. Other fractures may require surgery. Pins, screws or plates may be used to hold bone pieces in place.

- **Internal fixation**, also called **closed reduction surgery**, uses pins or wires to hold the bone pieces together without making an incision.
- Some fractures need **open reduction surgery** where an incision is made to get to the bone pieces. Bone pieces are set in place and may be held together with pins, plates or screws.
- **External fixation** uses a frame on the outside of the hand that is attached with pins to the bone above and below the injury.
- **Bone grafts** may be needed if bone is missing or crushed. The bone graft is most often taken from another part of your body.

Your hand surgeon will talk with you about the best treatment for your injury.



## Healing and Recovery

- While the hand fracture heals, your doctor or therapist may have you use a splint to limit motion.
- When you have enough healing, you will need to start exercises to limit stiffness in the hand. Be sure you follow the exercises your doctor or therapist gave you to improve your recovery.
- Avoid smoking since smoking will slow the blood supply to the bone and could slow or prevent bone healing. If you need help quitting, please talk to your doctor.

- Follow your doctor's orders to protect your hand during healing. You may need to limit your activity before returning to work or school.

As healing occurs, your doctor or therapist may have you start other exercises to help improve motion, strength and use of your hand. Be sure you follow your exercise program.

Recovery time will depend on the type of fracture and any other injuries. It is not unusual for a bony lump to appear at the fracture site. This is called a fracture callus and is part of normal healing. The lump will likely get smaller over time.

✦ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**