Dislocation, Metacarpal-Phalangeal

Metacarpals are the large bones at the base of the fingers that are between the fingers *(phalanges)* and the wrist. Your caregiver has diagnosed you as having a dislocation of one of your fingers. These are hinge joints. When a finger comes out of joint it is called a dislocation.

DIAGNOSIS

The *diagnosis* (learning what is wrong) of this injury is often made by examination. The first sign is pain with loss of movement. Severe forms of the injury will cause looseness *(laxity*) in the joint, indicating a tear of the ligaments. X-rays are also taken to make sure there are not other injuries. The most common of these injuries is a sprain.

TREATMENT

The treatment of this injury is to put the finger back into the socket. This is called a reduction. Mild sprains require immobilization of the finger for one to two weeks.

When ligaments are torn, treatment consists of surgical repair, followed by immobilization of the joint for six weeks. Physical therapy is started as soon as the ligaments are healed completely, and should last no more than three months. Physical therapy is done to maintain the range of motion and to regain strength. Sometimes there is residual stiffness and pain for which pain medications and anti-inflammatory medication can be taken.

Dislocation of the thumb is usually on the back of the finger *(dorsal*); the head of the metacarpal bone penetrates and damages the joint capsule. Treatment consists of closed or open reduction (putting the bones back into position, either by manipulation or surgically) followed by immobilization in plaster for four weeks.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply ice to the dislocation for 15 to 20 minutes each hour while awake for the first 2 days. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin.
- Wear your splint for 1 week or as directed or until seen again. If you remove the splint to dress or bathe, keep your finger in the same position as when the splint is on.
- If you use medications available without a prescription; take as directed by your caregiver. You may use Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- If your caregiver has given you a follow-up appointment, it is very important to keep that appointment. Not keeping the appointment could result in a chronic or permanent injury, pain, and disability. If there is any problem keeping the appointment, you must call back to this facility for assistance.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Pain or swelling to the injury increases and is not relieved with medications.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your finger becomes very swollen or painful, or develops a bluish discoloration, coldness, or numbness.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Document Released: 04/07/2004 Document Re-Released: 03/16/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.