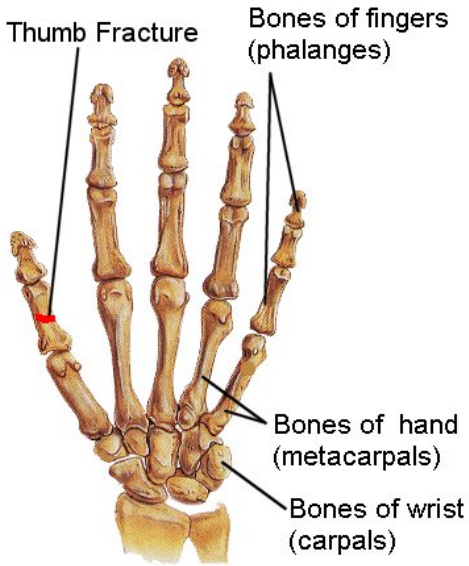
Thumb Fracture (Break in Bone)

The thumb can undergo many types of *fractures* (breaks). There are different ways of treating these fractures, all of which may be correct, varying from case to case. Your caregiver will discuss different ways to treat these fractures with you.



TREATMENT

- *Non-reduction.* This means the fracture is casted as it is without changing the positions of the fracture (bone pieces) involved. This fracture is casted in a "thumb spica" also called a hitchhiker cast. It is generally left on for 2 to 6 weeks.
- *Closed reduction.* The bones are manipulated back into position without using surgery.
- *ORIF (open reduction and internal fixation).* The fracture site is opened and the bone pieces are fixed into place with some type of hardware such as screws.

Your caregiver will discuss the type of fracture you have and the treatment that will be best for that problem. If surgery is the treatment of choice, the following is information for you to know and to let your caregiver know about prior to surgery.

LET YOUR CAREGIVERS KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- Allergies
- Medications taken including herbs, eye drops, over the counter medications, and creams
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams)
- Previous problems with anesthetics or Novocain
- Possibility of pregnancy, if this applies
- History of blood clots (thrombophlebitis)
- History of bleeding or blood problems
- Previous surgery
- Other health problems

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery area. A nurse will watch and check your progress. Once you are awake, stable, and taking fluids well, barring other problems you will be allowed to go home. Once home, an ice pack applied to your operative site may help with discomfort and keep the swelling down.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow your caregiver's instructions as to activities, exercises, physical therapy, and driving a car.
- Use thumb and exercise as directed.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is increased bleeding (more than a small spot) from the wound or from beneath your cast or splint.
- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound or from beneath your cast or splint.
- You have pus coming from wound or from beneath your cast or splint.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C) develops.
- There is a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing or from beneath your cast or splint.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop severe pain, decreased sensation such as numbness or tingling.
- You develop a rash.
- You have difficulty breathing.

- You have any allergic problems.

If you do not have a window in your cast for observing the wound, a discharge or minor bleeding may show up as a stain on the outside of your cast. Report these findings to your caregiver.

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