



Please call 911 if you think you have a medical emergency.

Boxer's Fracture Treatment

Self-Care at Home

Home care for boxer's fractures can be divided into care prior to seeing a doctor and care after a diagnosis of a boxer's fracture is made.

- The immediate goals of caring for an injured hand are to minimize pain and swelling, minimize the risk of infection of any open cuts, and to prevent further injury caused by an unstable fracture.
 - The best approach to reduce pain and swelling is to apply an ice pack to the injured area. If ice is not available, placing a towel soaked in cold water on the injured hand will work. Elevating the injured hand will also help reduce swelling.
 - An open cut sustained at the time of injury suggests an open fracture. This increases the risk of infection and may result in poor healing. All cuts should be washed with soap and water and then covered with a clean bandage immediately to reduce the risk of infection.
 - A key technique to prevent further injury from a fracture is to immobilize the injured hand. This is often best accomplished by holding the injured hand in the uninjured hand. In addition, take care not to use the injured hand to lift objects or perform any task that would place stress on it. Using a broken hand that is not properly immobilized can cause damage to surrounding muscles, blood vessels, tendons, ligaments, and nerves.
- Home care after the diagnosis of boxer's fracture is based on how the doctor treated the hand. Home care includes pain management, cast or splint care, and monitoring for signs of infection.
 - Bones, like many other parts of the body, contain nerve fibers that transmit the sensation of pain. Pain from broken bones is caused by swelling due to injury of the tissues around the fracture site, or by the broken bone moving against the nerve fibers. Pain should lessen once a broken bone is immobilized and movement is

prevented. Some degree of pain may still persist. When a doctor writes a prescription for pain medication, it is important to take the medication as prescribed. This will help alleviate pain and will minimize the risk of any unwanted side effects from the medication. For mild pain, over-the-counter acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) may be used as directed on the label. This should be discussed with the doctor before you take these medicines.

- Splinting or casting commonly is performed on all boxer's fractures that do not require immediate surgery. All splints and casts should be kept dry in order to maintain their strength. A complication that can be seen with this procedure is the cast becoming too tight from the swelling of the fracture. When this happens, you may feel pain under the cast or splint. Another sign is numbness or tingling in the fingers on the casted hand. In addition, the finger may become cool to the touch. When this occurs, call your doctor or report to a hospital's emergency department immediately for evaluation.
- Infection can occur at an open cut. Wounds should be kept clean and covered until healing is complete. If stitches are used to close a cut, the doctor will provide additional instructions on how to care for the stitches and when they should be removed. It is important to follow these directions carefully to minimize the risk of infection. Monitor any cuts for signs of infection. Warning signs of infection include redness, red streaking away from the cut, warmth, or swelling around the site of the cut. Pus may also drain from the wound. Any of these signs requires immediate evaluation.

Medical Treatment

If a boxer's fracture is detected, the primary goals of treatment are to immobilize the hand to permit proper healing and to alleviate the pain associated with fractures. In order to properly immobilize most broken bones, the splint should immobilize the joints above and below the site of injury. In the case of a boxer's fracture, different types of splints may be used. One type of splint may extend from the fingers, with the fingertips exposed, to the forearm near the elbow. Another type of splint that has been shown to be effective for some boxer's fractures of the little finger is to buddy-tape the ring finger and little finger together. Your doctor will decide what type of splint will treat your fracture the best.

- When a boxer's fracture occurs, it is possible for a portion of the metacarpal bone to move out of normal alignment. This is called angulation. The amount of angulation will determine what type of treatment is required to ensure proper healing. People with boxer's

fractures who have acceptable amounts of angulation may be splinted in the emergency department or doctor's office.

- Any degree of angulation in the second or third metacarpal bones is considered abnormal and requires referral to a hand specialist for possible surgical repair. Boxer's fractures of the fourth and fifth metacarpal bones only require surgery if large degrees of angulation are present and the bones cannot be moved into the correct place by pulling and pushing on them.
- Because broken bones can cause significant amounts of pain, pain management is an important aspect to treating broken bones. Pain management is best accomplished with anti-inflammatory medicines and pain relievers. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) usually provides good pain relief with few side effects. These over-the-counter medications, or any prescription pain medicines, should be taken as directed to decrease the risk of side effects.

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For more information, read the complete article, Boxer's Fracture

(<http://www.emedicinehealth.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=59174>) on <http://www.emedicinehealth.com>.

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