Boxer’s Fracture
(Fifth Metacarpal neck fracture)

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What is a Boxer’s Fracture?
Your fifth metacarpal is the long bone under the little finger. The bone has a head, neck, shaft and base. The large knuckle of your little finger is the head of the metacarpal, and just underneath is the neck. The metacarpal can be fractured (broken) following a fall, a punch, sport or other types of impact onto the hand.
A fracture to the fifth metacarpal bone through the neck is known as a ‘boxer’s fracture’.

What are the symptoms?
Following the injury, the knuckle and hand may become painful, swollen and bruised.

How do I know I have a Boxer’s Fracture?
You should seek medical attention if you suspect you have a fracture. Your doctor or nurse will ask you how the injury occurred and examine your hand. If they feel you have a possible fracture, they will arrange an X-ray to confirm the injury.

How is it treated?
The majority of boxer’s fractures are treated conservatively, meaning without an operation. You will be placed in a Bedford splint which links your little and ring finger together, but allowing you to still bend your fingers.
Getting your fingers moving straight away (or as early as possible) is the most important thing to do to reduce the problems of not moving your finger. Taking painkillers is useful in the first couple of days to allow you to move the hand/fingers.
The exercises below are the recommended exercises to start doing to reduce your chance of having issues later down the line.

Complete each of these exercises ten times, then repeat four times a day:

1. Hook

2. Flat fist

3. Full Fist

4. Straight bend
How will I know if I need surgery?

In a few cases, there may be a benefit from having surgery to re-align the bones and improve the function of your hands. This is uncommon, but if there are concerns that you may require surgery, your doctor or nurse will discuss your case with the hands team, who will review your X-rays and let you know if you need a further review for possible surgery.

Will my hand return to normal?

People with this injury usually return to normal activities within six weeks of injury. We would advise you avoid contact sports for three months following the injury. The knuckle is often less prominent after a healed boxer’s fracture and some patients may have a bony bump on the back of the hand, which is a cosmetic problem only.

Contact number:

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your injury or treatment, please contact the hand co-ordinators on: 
Tel: 0121 371 6169

The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4323.

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