

# *Orthopaedic Connection*

## **Hand Fractures**

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.  
Orthopaedic Surgeon

### *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Hand fractures are among the most common injuries I see in the emergency room and the office. They come in all sizes and shapes so to speak from fairly simple to extremely complex.

The hand is probably our most vulnerable part. It is involved in almost everything we do so it follows that it is injured a lot in accidents and everyday activities. Hold up your hand (pun!) if you have ever:

- put out your hand to break a fall
- slammed your fingers in a door
- had a ball hit your finger
- jammed your finger(s) while reaching for something.

### **Feel Like Punching a Wall?**

If David Letterman does a top ten list of how people injure their hand, punching a wall may be near the top of the list! I think I will talk to Dave about this. So far as I know the wall always wins. Always.

### **Orthopaedic Jeopardy**

A fracture of the little finger metacarpal caused by hitting something.

What is \_\_\_\_\_ a Boxer's fracture?

It is a fracture of the fifth metacarpal which is the bone in the hand just above the knuckle of the little finger. The bone breaks just above the knuckle and tilts downward. Boxer's fractures account for about 1/3 of all hand fractures.

Sometimes I can treat it in a cast as primary treatment. If the break is tilted downward (displaced) too much, I have to operate and insert stainless steel pins for about 4 – 6 weeks. They are removed at the end of 4 – 6 weeks.

### **Finger and Thumb Bones**

Fractures of the little bones in the fingers and thumb are nasty because they often won't stay put in a splint. The fracture also often goes into the joint making it difficult to hold. **Surgery**. While these fractures are in little bones they often need pins to hold them quiet while they heal. These little bones heal slowly and can limit use of the hand for 2 or 3 months or longer.

Arthritis and stiffness in fingers are complications I often see with these finger fractures.

### **Wrist Bone (Carpal) Fractures**

Ah, the 8 little wrist bones. Lining up in their 2 little rows. Nature's miracle universal joint.

Break one and you are in for a bad time. Sometimes they separate or partially dislocate making them even harder to treat. Surgery is frequently needed. Healing can be slow (months).

### **Open (Compound) Fractures**

This means the skin is torn or “open” over the fracture exposing the bone and perhaps the joint to the outside. This is a serious problem that I frequently take to surgery to meticulously clean before doing any type of repair. Suregery is done to minimize the chance of bone infection, which can lead to permanent problems.

### **Summary**

Well, there you have it. You only have 2 hands, so be careful. And if you do have a problem prompt, correct care for your injury insures the best possibility of a satisfactory result.

### **Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website.**

I sincerely appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Besides what you read today there is a huge treasure trove of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information at [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It contains the Website Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and complete archive of every GCH article I have written.

I specialize in you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush