



# Student Health Center UNC Wilmington

## INSTRUCTION SHEET: METACARPAL (BOXER'S) FRACTURE

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a fracture of your hand. The broken bone is the little finger metacarpal bone. This injury is also known as a “boxer's fracture,” as it most often results from punching a person or object.

A boxer's fracture usually heals quite well. Healing is aided by keeping the area immobilized (not moving) with a splint. The goal in treating a boxer's fracture is to preserve hand function: Maintaining movement and use of the finger is most important.

Sometimes, the fracture leaves a small change in the appearance of the hand: The “knuckle” of the little finger may be flat or sunken, no longer sticking up. This minor change in appearance of the hand has little significance.

### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR METACARPAL FRACTURE:

- 1- Rest the hand. Minimize use of the hand, performing only essential tasks. Wear the splint.
- 2- Elevate the hand. Elevation helps reduce swelling, especially in the initial 48 hours after the injury. Keep the hand above the level of the heart. Let gravity work to reduce the swelling.
- 3- Apply cold packs to the hand off-and-on for the first 48 hours after injury. Cold helps decrease pain and swelling. Do not apply ice directly to the hand, causing discomfort. Rather, aim for coolness, yet comfort, applying a layer of towel between the cold pack and hand. The splint can be removed when applying cold.
- 4- Keep the splint on to maximize healing. The splint needs to be worn about three weeks. During this time, you can take the splint off briefly to bathe or adjust the splint.
- 5- Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with a boxer's fracture. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
- 6- The provider may prescribe stronger pain medication. Take the prescription medicine only if needed; do not take the medication and perform dangerous activities such as driving a car or operating machinery.
- 7- Make a prompt follow-up appointment with your personal/referral orthopedic (bone) doctor. Be sure to tell the office that you have a broken hand, and need a “work-in” appointment in the next several days. Pick up your X-rays before your appointment. The orthopedic doctor can follow the progress of healing, help minimize the possibility of long-term hand problems, and assist you in returning to normal activities with the hand.