



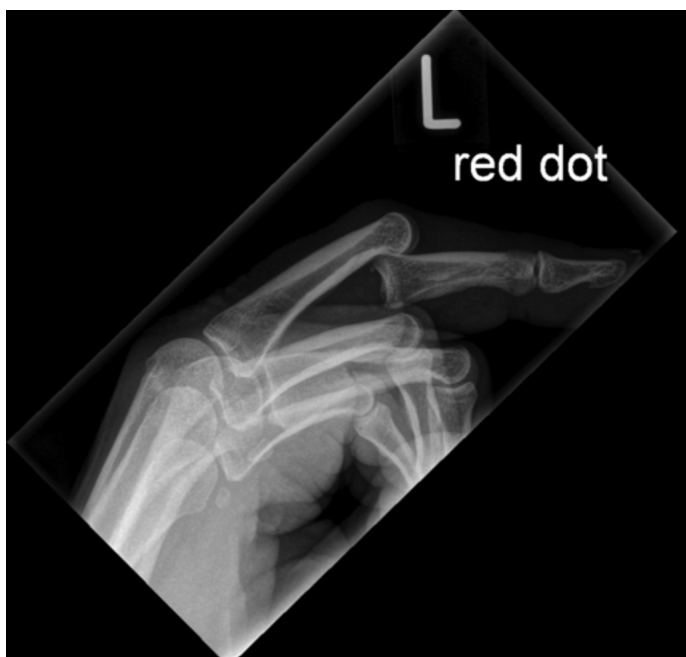
CONDITION

What are Finger joint dislocations?

When the two gliding surfaces of a joint become disconnected the joint is dislocated. If the joint surfaces are only partly disconnected the joint is called subluxed. Frequently there is an associated fracture of the adjacent bones.



A dorsal dislocation of a proximal interphalangeal joint with no fracture



A volar dislocation of a proximal interphalangeal joint with no fracture

How do these injuries occur?

Sporting injuries commonly cause finger joint dislocations, such as in impact with a cricket ball on the finger tips. Even a simple fall can result in a dislocation though.

How is the diagnosis made?

The affected joint will look a peculiar shape and be painful. Xrays confirm the diagnosis and also show any fractures.

What is the treatment of these injuries?

Any dislocated or subluxed joint needs to be put back in place as soon as possible (reduced). This is sometimes done immediately if there is someone present who can perform the procedure. More frequently it will be done in the local Accident and Emergency department. Occasionally the joint is difficult to reduce or is difficult to keep lined up properly after the reduction and further input is required from a specialist, sometimes including surgery.

Volar dislocations of the proximal interphalangeal joints are always associated with damage to part of the extensor tendons on the back of the finger and will need a splint and specialist rehabilitation (see Rehabilitation pages, Extensor tendon injury, Zone III, Central slip).

What complications can occur?

If the joint is reduced quickly, is stable after reduction and there are no associated fractures then a good recovery can be expected. The affected joint will be swollen and stiff however and some work will be necessary to recover full function. Elevation, ice packs and gentle stretching exercises are useful. The swelling can take several months to settle fully.

If there are associated injuries then recovery can be much more difficult and take longer. This depends on how severe the damage has been. Your specialist will advise you regarding your particular injury pattern and its implications.