

# Expectations for Finger Pinning Surgery



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## Why is finger pinning required?

Finger pinning is required when a broken finger bone is unstable or out of natural alignment. When this is required, temporary metal pins are used to hold the bone in appropriate position as it heals. Surgery does not make the bone heal faster. The surgery aligns the bone correctly so that it heals in the proper position.



*Intraoperative x-rays of a patient who required surgical fixation of middle and ring finger fractures.*

## What to expect on the day of surgery

You will be given light sedation with IV medication for the procedure. Local anesthetic is also injected at the time of surgery. You will be breathing on your own, as intubation (inserting a tube into the throat) is not typically required for this surgery.

You will not feel any pain during surgery, and it would be unusual for you to remember anything during surgery.

The broken bone is aligned properly, and one or more pins are inserted through the skin and into the bone across the fracture to stabilize the bone. The finger is placed into a plaster splint after surgery.

It is important to keep the dressing clean and dry after surgery until the pins are removed as the pins go from outside the skin into the bone, so getting them wet or dirty increases the risk of infection.

The surgery itself usually takes less than 30 minutes, but patients spend several hours at the surgery center/hospital for surgical preparation and post-operative recovery time.

## What to expect after surgery

**First Post-Op Appointment:** After seeing your doctor and getting an x-ray, you will see hand therapy where the therapists will make you a custom splint. The splint must be worn at all times except for pin care until the pins are removed. The therapists will instruct you how to take care of the pins. **Please note that our office will schedule you a therapy appointment at the same time as your first post-operative appointment, so you will receive a call from our office confirming this appointment.**

The pins are removed several weeks after surgery in the office (different types of fracture patterns require different durations). The pins are removed before the bone is fully healed to allow for finger motion to prevent the fingers from becoming stiff. Hand therapy for range of motion usually starts the day the pins are removed. Removing the pins usually does not hurt at all, though most patients

say it feels “weird.” If it does hurt, the pain is usually minimal and disappears immediately. It is normal to have some mild bloody spotting on the dressing for several days after pin removal.

After the pins are removed, the fracture is stable enough to move with therapy exercises but not healed enough to sustain a strong force to the bone. As such, the splint must still be worn for several more weeks except for bathing and doing daily range of motion exercises.

Avoid lifting anything heavier than 2 pounds until you are instructed to do so.

It often takes 6 months from surgery to reach the maximal improvement of range of motion. Grip strength often takes a year from surgery to reach maximal improvement.

**Medications:** You will be given pain medication to help with any discomfort after the surgery. Sometimes, these medications can cause nausea or constipation. You will also be prescribed medications to help with these side effects. Some people find that over-the-counter pain relievers, like ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol), work well enough that the prescription medications are not necessary.

If you have any questions, the most efficient way to contact us is via the messaging portal on MyChart. Dr. Bogle’s team works on checking and answering these messages throughout the workday to get back with you as quickly as possible. **After hours and on weekends** (outside of 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday-Friday) please call 804-379-2414 to speak with the on-call provider.



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