



Preventing Work-Related Injuries to the Hand, Wrist or Elbow

No matter how many precautions we take, work-related injuries to the hand, wrist, finger or elbow seem inevitable. Here we discuss common hand injuries, the most common causes of workplace injuries and how to prevent them.

For most jobs, especially trade-related occupations such as construction jobs including carpentry, flooring or plumbing and mechanical jobs such as a locksmith, machinist or auto mechanic, you need your hands to do your job.

Without the reliable use of your hands, you aren't able to work. Therefore, safety in the workplace should always be the number one priority. However, even the most skilled and reliable workers are susceptible to work-related injuries of the hand, which can be painful and result in time off work or high financial costs.

OrthoIndy hand, wrist and elbow specialist, Dr. Matthew Walker also treats worker's compensation patients and sees common workplace injuries such as wrist sprains and strains, broken fingers or broken wrists.

"It's important to be familiar with the causes of common hand injuries as well as how to prevent them in the workplace," said Dr. Walker. "Many of the injuries I see can be prevented by following a few safety measures and being aware of your surroundings while you work."

If you have an open wound, a concussion, a burn, an animal bite or you are bleeding, go to an emergency room right away. OrthoIndy trauma physicians are located at the **Trauma Center at St.Vincent Indianapolis**, and there is a team of experts on call 24/7 to handle orthopedic traumas.



For injuries related to the hand, finger, wrist or elbow, visit **OrthoIndy Urgent Care** located throughout Indianapolis with weekend and evening hours or make an appointment with an **OrthoIndy hand, wrist and elbow specialist**.

What is the most common occupational hand injury?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the most common injuries in the workplace are sprains, strains and tears. This includes injuries to the wrist and hand.

Hand injuries send more than one million workers to the emergency room each year. Many of these injuries required job restriction, job transfer or lost working days.

“ Hand injuries ”

are one of the most common injuries in the workplace which means with medical costs or disability claims, they add up to be expensive to treat, both for employers and employees alike. The good news is that hand injuries are also one of the easiest injuries to prevent.

- Dr. Matthew Walker

6 Most Common Hand Injuries in the Workplace

1. **Lacerations:** Lacerations are deep cuts or tears in the flesh. Most lacerations are easily treated, but nerve or tendon damage is possible if the cut is deep.
2. **Crushes:** Occur when a body part is caught between heavy equipment or machinery and another hard surface, like the floor or a wall.
3. **Avulsions:** Fractures that occur when a bone is moving one way and a tendon or ligament is moving or pulled in the opposite direction.
4. **Detachments:** Can occur like an avulsion but are typically more serious and often involve entire fingers or hands becoming separated from the body.
5. **Punctures:** Occurs when a sharp object penetrates the skin and causes a wound that is typically narrower and deeper than a cut or scrape.
6. **Fractures:** A break in a bone most commonly in the hand or wrist which requires weeks to months of recovery time.

Additional hand hazards include electrical burns, exposure to chemicals, frostbite, penetration, contusions, sprains and strains.

What are the most common causes of work-related injuries to the hand?

"Human error is one of the most common causes of hand injuries in the workplace," said Dr. Walker. "It's easy to let your mind wander after a long day or ignore typical safety measures that seem mundane. However, these simple distractions can cause serious injuries to yourself or your coworkers."

Top Causes of Work-Related Injuries to the Hand

- **Rotating parts:** Machines with rotating motions can cause injuries to the hand. Primarily if you are wearing a loose-fitting glove, which can feed into the machinery, taking your hand with it.
- **Automation:** Machines that are programmed to start on its own can be dangerous, even when it's not actually running. These automatic machines can start up unexpectedly and catch your hands if you are too close or not paying attention.
- **Hot and cold spots:** Hot areas in machinery such as a welding instrument or a hot flame on a burner can cause serious burns to the hands. Equally dangerous, exposure to cold temperatures and surfaces such as a refrigeration system or pipes can cause severe burns as well.
- **Pinch points:** Pinch points such as a space between two pieces of equipment or when moving materials with your hands can easily crush fingertips or cause your entire hands to get caught.
- **Entanglement:** Jewelry and loose clothing can easily get caught in moving equipment or on outside objects which can pull a finger or entire hand into equipment.
- **Falls:** Simple trip and falls over misplaced objects can cause you to fall on an outstretched arm and hurt your elbow, wrist or hand.

How can hand injuries be prevented at work?

"Be mindful of your workplace and take the extra steps to preventing injury part of your daily routine," said Dr. Walker. "Sometimes it can be tempting to ignore safety measures because you are trying to hurry and get a job done or you think a hand injury won't happen to you after doing a job for many years. However, a hand injury can occur to anyone at any time."



Quick Safety Tips

- Wear appropriate safety gear such as work gloves when handling rough materials and when hands are directly involved with lifting or moving objects
- Always use machinery guards
- Replace machinery guard and lock machinery or confirm it is turned off before reaching into it
- Remove trip hazards from work sites before beginning a job
- Do not wear any rings when working as it could get caught in machinery or on an object
- Wear gloves to pick up broken glass or nails
- Wash hands frequently to remove grease and oil and prevent slippery hands
- Be cautious when setting down items with your hands to make sure you have enough space or time to prevent crushing fingers
- Never wear gloves around quick moving machinery which can catch on the glove and pull the hand into the machine
- Remove protruding items such as nails, sharp edges or splinters before working
- Do not wear gloves or loose clothing that doesn't fit correctly; ask your employer for safety gear that fits appropriately
- Be aware of emergency stop devices or buttons around automatic machinery

3 Tips to Reduce Hand Injuries

1. **Speak up:** If you don't feel comfortable or safe in your workplace speak to management. Your employee wants to reduce injury in the workplace as well and might not be aware that you don't have the proper equipment.
2. **Take a safety course:** Many construction companies offer first-aid training for their staff. Learning about health and safety can help you become more aware of hazards and how to avoid injury.
3. **Educate yourself on the machinery:** Ask for a training program on equipment or have someone else explain the machinery to you so you are aware of the danger zones and how to minimize hazards.



With years of experience and the most advanced technology, OrthoIndy hand, wrist and elbow specialists will give you the best chance possible to achieve your goals. [Make an appointment](#) or visit one of our urgent care clinics and let OrthoIndy's team of experts help you get normal back, whatever your normal looks like.



To help you better understand what your pain means, what might be causing it and how you can prevent future injuries view our [***Ultimate Guide to Hand, Wrist and Elbow Injuries.***](#)

