

Norwood Hospital Orthopedic Surgeon Saves Firefighter's Severely Fractured Finger



According to Thomas N. from Providence, Rhode Island, he's had enough broken bones in his lifetime that he is able to take them in stride. As a firefighter for Norfolk, Massachusetts, a broken finger recently sustained on the job was more than just a nuisance, however. The 42-year-old caught his right ring finger in a hose line while performing routine maintenance. "I realized right away that this was a bad fracture," said Thomas. "My finger rotated 180 degrees and was facing the wrong way. I've broken a decent amount of bones and it certainly wasn't the most painful bone, but in this case, the pain wasn't the issue."

According to Tracy Webber, MD, a hand and wrist specialist and orthopedic surgeon with SMG Norwood Orthopedics Associates affiliated with Norwood Hospital, Thomas sustained a serious hand injury that, if not surgically treated, would have impacted his use of this right ring finger. "Thomas experienced a displaced fracture of his right ring finger proximal phalanx with significant rotational deformity. Without surgery and post-operative occupational therapy, his finger would always curl under the neighboring finger, limiting his ability to make a fist and permanently impacting the hand's ability to fully function due to the injury to that one finger. This is a big deal for anyone, but especially a firefighter where saving peoples' lives depends on perfect function of his hands."



For Thomas, being a firefighter means full use of his hand is critical to handling heavy equipment and climbing ladders. "I didn't want to make a big deal out of it, but I absolutely did not want to limit myself because of a finger," he said. Unfortunately, the injury happened right before a very important event – his wedding. While waiting wasn't ideal, he was able to get married and take a 2-week honeymoon and then Thomas was back and ready for surgery. After meeting with Dr. Webber, surgery was scheduled within the day.

"While the delay wasn't ideal, Dr. Webber understood, and I am pleased that surgery went very well. I was on the table for less than an hour and the total time was about three hours with prep and recovery," he said. "After surgery, it was like the break never happened," said Thomas. "I had four pins in my finger and you can't tell." According to Thomas, he was first fitted for a soft cast, then two weeks after that, a hard one, then another cast a few weeks after that one. This was to ensure that the fractured bone was healing completely while the pins held the broken pieces in the correct position. During this time, he began occupational therapy but after two sessions his occupational therapy team returned him to work. "I was diligent in doing the recommended stretches," he said. "I wanted to get back to work. Now, it's like it never happened. Dr. Webber did an amazing job and I can't say enough good things about the team at her office too."

For more information about treatments for trauma or hand and wrist pain, please contact SMG Norwood Orthopedics Associates at 781-769-6699.

