A homodigital two stage reverse dorsal adipofascial flap for fingertip reconstruction:

Y Bhatt, N Panse, K Vyas, M Tandale, S Sule

Citation

Abstract
Fingertip injuries are one of the commonest injuries encountered by a plastic surgeon. Various loco regional flaps have been described for reconstruction of fingertip injuries. Presented here is a case of two-stage reverse dorsal adipofascial flap for transverse fingertip amputations with injury distal to the germinal matrix. The flap survived completely providing a stable and durable cover to the fingertip. This flap was based on the distal dorsal branches of the digital arteries just distal to the distal interphalangeal joint. We believe that this flap should be strongly recommended in selected cases.

INTRODUCTION
Microsurgical advances have enabled distal replantations to be successful however such facilities and expertise are not universally available. Terminalisation and loco regional flaps are the mainstay of management of these injuries in areas without microsurgical capabilities.

Traditionally, various volar advancement flaps including the Tranquilli-Leali, the Segmuller flap, the Venkatswami flap, the thenar flap are used for fingertip reconstruction. The two stage dorsal cross-finger flap may be used in cases where single stage volar flap resurfacing is not possible. However all these flaps leave scars at the volar aspect of the reconstructed fingertip that may remain hypersensitive or even painful. Stiffness of an adjacent uninjured finger may follow crossfinger flap reconstruction.1

We describe a homodigital two stage reverse dorsal adipofascial flap for fingertip reconstruction based on the distal dorsal arterial branches of the digital artery that gives a pleasing and stable coverage for fingertip injuries.

CASE HISTORY
An adult male patient presented with a transverse amputation to the index finger through the nail bed just distal to the germinal matrix with loss of tuft of the terminal phalanx. The amputated part was not brought to the hospital with the patient. The remainder of the finger was uninjured.

A homodigital two stage reverse adipofascial flap was used for fingertip reconstruction. At six months follow up the flap was well settled with normal static two point discrimination of 3 mm and no cold intolerance. There was a full range of movement of the affected finger.

OPERATIVE TECHNIQUE
After assessing the defect, the flap was planned in reverse. A template was kept with its base just distal to the distal interphalangeal joint covering the defect. The two stage dorsal cross-finger flap may be used in cases where single stage volar flap resurfacing is not possible. However all these flaps leave scars at the volar aspect of the reconstructed fingertip that may remain hypersensitive or even painful. Stiffness of an adjacent uninjured finger may follow crossfinger flap reconstruction.1

A base is drawn just distal to the distal interphalangeal (DIP) joint to include the vascular basis for the flap. This flap is based on the distal dorsal branches of the digital arteries that originate just distal to the distal interphalangeal joint on either side, forming a rich vascular bed on top of the extensor tendon insertion just proximal to the germinal matrix.2

An appropriate sized flap is marked on the dorsal surface of the middle phalanx extending between the midlateral lines. A ‘Z’ type incision was given, with the parallel limbs of the Z placed at the proximal and distal interphalangeal joints. Thin skin flaps were raised taking care not to damage the sub-dermal plexus. After the skin flaps were raised, the adipofascial flap is raised from the proximal interphalangeal...
Residual nail bed remnants. The residual nail has to be level distal to the germinal matrix with removal of the aliphalanx with increased chance of flap necrosis. Dimitrios et al. raised that extends to the proximal third of the proximal joint are in jeopardy, and a random adipofascial flap must be used. Dimitrios H. Laoulakos, Constantinos H. Tsetsonis, J. Hand Surg. (Br.) 24: 525, 1999.

Dorsal arterial branches distal to the distal interphalangeal joint are intact to provide the dorsal branches, which form the basis of this flap. It uses only the adipofascial tissue on the dorsal surface of the middle phalanx of the traumatized finger. Thus, the volar surface is left intact with no scars to compromise its use. Utmost care to keep the paratenon intact during flap elevation prevents damage to the extensor tendon. Early mobilization and no use of the adjacent normal finger prevent joint stiffness. This flap is safe, as it is a bipedicled flap based on the dorsal branches of the digital arteries on both sides of the finger. The operative technique is easy to perform, even without loupe magnification. Both the stages are performed under local anesthesia on a day case basis. Probably the only major drawback of this flap is that simultaneous nail bed grafting is not possible as the flap traverses over the normal skin and nail to cover the exposed distal phalynx. If desired, lengthening of the nail for cosmetic enhancement can be done by eponychial flaps after the flap settles. A longer follow up with more cases is needed. However, with our preliminary data, we strongly recommend this flap for select cases.

**References**

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Author Information

Yogesh C. Bhatt, MCh Plastic Surgery
Professor and Head, Department of Plastic Surgery, SSG Hospital and medical college

Nikhil S. Panse, MS General Surgery
Department of Plastic Surgery, SSG Hospital and medical college

Kinnari A. Vyas, MCh Plastic Surgery
Department of Plastic Surgery, SSG Hospital and medical college

Mangesh S. Tandale, MS General Surgery
Department of Plastic Surgery, SSG Hospital and medical college

Shaunak N. Sule, MS General Surgery
Department of Plastic Surgery, SSG Hospital and medical college