



# GRABOW HAND TO SHOULDER CENTER

**Ryan J. Grabow, MD**

Board Certified, Hand to Shoulder Specialist

*Providing Comprehensive Care from the Shoulder to Fingertips*

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## THE AVOCADO --- THE MOST DANGEROUS FOOD IN YOUR KITCHEN

*Local hand surgeon gives safety tips to prevent extremely common avocado hand injuries*

Every year hand surgeons throughout the world see countless patients with lacerations to their hands or fingers from trying to remove the pit from an avocado. While some of these injuries are minor most are severe requiring complex surgery to repair injured nerves, tendons, or both. Fortunately, these devastating injuries can easily be prevented. Local hand to shoulder specialist, Ryan J. Grabow, MD, reviews the common causes of avocado hand injuries and reviews proper techniques in handling this dangerous fruit on his educational website.

"If a patient comes to see me with a cut on their palm or finger, all they have to say is they were in the kitchen and I know it was from an avocado," says hand to shoulder specialist Ryan J. Grabow, MD from the Grabow Hand to Shoulder Center in Henderson, Nevada. "They think I am psychic but it is such a common injury that it is almost always the cause if it occurred in the kitchen. Due to the increasing popularity of guacamole, avocados have quickly replaced bagels as the most likely cause of a severe hand injury in the kitchen." says Grabow.

As the popularity and sales of avocado have steadily increased, so too have the number of injuries. The cause of its title as the most dangerous food is due to three factors: 1) It's size, 2) It's soft flesh, 3) It's smooth hard pit. According to Dr. Grabow, injuries occur while holding the avocado in one hand while trying to remove the pit with a sharp knife. "We are creatures of habit and convenience, after we cut the avocado in half with a sharp knife, it is only natural to hold the avocado in our hand to steady it and use that same knife to remove the pit – therein lies the problem!" "The knife easily slips through the soft pulp, bounces off the smooth pit and through the back of the avocado into our hand – usually the base of the index or middle finger is cut." Because our nerves, arteries, and tendons are immediately below the skin they are almost always injured.

Although many are aware of the inherent danger in stabbing at the pit, a few of the alternative methods of pitting are also dangerous, according to Dr. Grabow, "There are two popular methods involving knife use, the first involves hitting the sharp edge of the knife into the pit, the other involves prying the pit out with the sharp side of the knife. While both these techniques look impressive on Youtube.com, I have patients who injured themselves with both methods. While I have seen many knife injuries from pitting, I have yet to see any patients who have cut themselves with a spoon!"

Unfortunately efforts to properly educate the public are slow in coming. Many websites devoted to cooking or preparing food feature instructions from chefs using advanced knife techniques that are not safe for the average cook. Websites like Youtube.com are filled with videos showing dangerous techniques even from supposed expert sources. Fortunately kitchen utensils have been created specifically designed to safely slice the avocado and remove the pit.

***To avoid potential hand injuries, Dr. Grabow recommends the following safety tips:***

**DO NOT cut the avocado in your hand** – Place the avocado on a cutting board or towel and place your hand above it stabilizing it on both sides with your fingertips. Place the knife on the avocado between the fingers and push straight down. Turn it over and repeat until the avocado is completely cut in half.

**Have the Right Tools for the Job** – After slicing the avocado in half, use a spoon or commercial pitter to remove the pit.

Committed to patient education and injury prevention, Dr. Grabow has an entire a section on his interactive website, **DoctorGrabow.com**, dedicated to safety issues. He encourages anyone planning to celebrate Cinco de Mayo with fresh guacamole to visit the **Injury Prevention Section** of his site to view safety tips and techniques for handling avocados.

The Grabow Hand to Shoulder Center was founded by board certified and fellowship trained hand to shoulder specialist Ryan J. Grabow, MD. Dr. Grabow provides comprehensive care for the hand, wrist, elbow, and shoulder emphasizing non-operative and minimally invasive techniques. Through his website, DoctorGrabow.com, visitors have access to articles, animations, and videos related to the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of injuries and conditions affecting the shoulder to fingertips.

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