
DR BOB JANG

Orthopaedic Surgeon

Patient Name _____

Follow-Up Appointment: _____

THUMB ULNAR COLLATERAL LIGAMENT TEAR/STENER LESIONS

The thumb UCL injury can be acute or chronic. Known as the 'Skier's thumb' as falling on the ski slopes with your hand strapped to a ski pole is a common cause for injury. Chronic attenuation injuries to the UCL are known as 'Gamekeeper's thumb' due to the repetitive grasping with the thumb when catching game (ie. rabbits).

This can lead to chronic instability if not diagnosed and treated appropriately. This may present with weakness to pinch with your thumb, grasping and even finer tasks such as holding a pen to write.

Diagnosis of this injury is with a focused history, examination and imaging (Xray, CT, USS, MRI). Your clinician will decide which mode of imaging will be best suited for your injury as the ligament may snap in the middle or pull off a piece of bone (avulsion injury).

Sometimes the ligament pulls off with a piece of bone and flips over a tendon, inhibiting it from ever healing back down to bone without surgery. This is called a 'Stener lesion'.

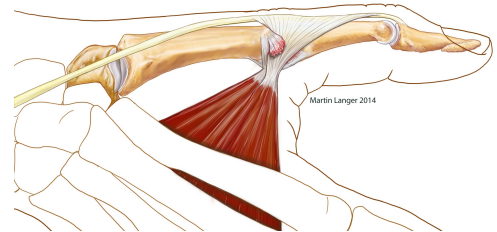
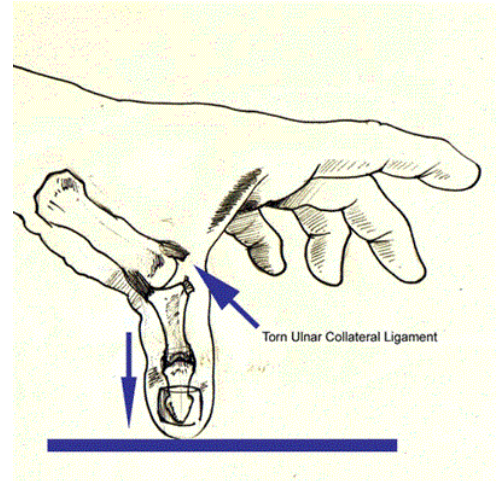
Dr Jang will examine your hand and imaging and advise you whether your injury can be treated non operatively or operatively. If you have an acute injury, you may be able to have a direct repair of the ligament back to bone (through bone tunnels or a suture anchor). If it is a chronic injury, you may be advised a tendon graft (usually from your wrist) or anchors with suture tape to create an 'internal brace' and make your thumb joint (MCP joint) stable again. This is called a thumb UCL reconstruction.

Surgery

A thumb UCL repair/reconstruction is a day stay procedure. You will be able to go home the same day with your wrist in a plaster. You will receive a general anaesthetic and go to sleep for the procedure. You may also receive a nerve block to numb out the arm and hand for the duration of the operation. The operation itself will take approximately 60-90minutes.

Can I wash my hands?

No. You will be in a backslab plaster for 2 weeks whilst your wounds heal. You will see the Hand Therapist to change you into a thermoplastic wrist splint at the 2 week visit. You will need to keep your hand dry until you are seen at the 2 week mark to check that your wounds have healed.



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THUMB UCL REPAIR/RECONSTRUCTION POST OPERATIVE PROTOCOL

0-2 weeks

You will go home on the day of surgery. Please keep the plaster dry for 2 weeks. Keep your hand elevated at the level of the heart. ie. Prop the hand up on a pillow when you go to sleep or have it in your lap when sitting down. Strictly no lifting, pinching or using your thumb to use your smartphone. Shoulder, elbow, finger exercises permitted.



2 weeks

See Dr Jang for removal of the plaster, review of the wound and change into a thermoplastic splint with the hand therapist. Please ensure you have an appointment with the hand therapist in conjunction with Dr Jang's appointment.

2-4 weeks

You may wash your hands and shower without dressings or the wrist splint. The plastic splint must remain on at all other times except when performing your rehab exercises.

Scar massage/desensitization

Active range of motion of thumb MCP/CMC/IP joint (Dr Jang will advise specifically if you need to slow down your movement in case your bone/fixation quality isn't good).

No pinching/grabbing or lifting at this stage.

4-6 weeks

Active range of motion of: thumb MCP/CMC/IP joints.

Opposition allowed.

No pinching/grabbing or lifting at this stage

6 weeks

See Dr Jang for a clinical assessment

6-8 weeks

Full range of motion. Start to wean out of your brace.

No heavy pinching or gripping.

8-16 weeks

Wean brace completely. Progressive strengthening limited by your pain.

12 weeks

Final assessment with Dr Jang

16 weeks +

Weight training, return to sport and labour jobs as required

Avoid sustained, heavy pinching across the thumb until 4 months from surgery.

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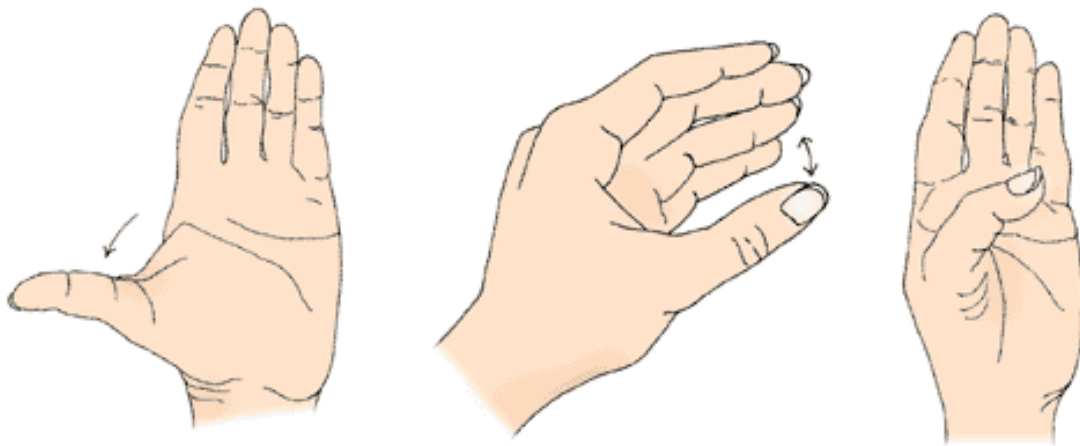
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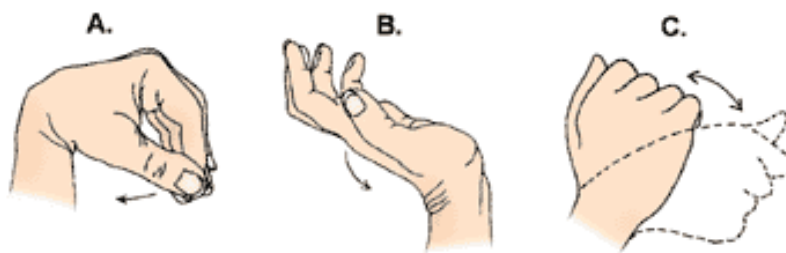
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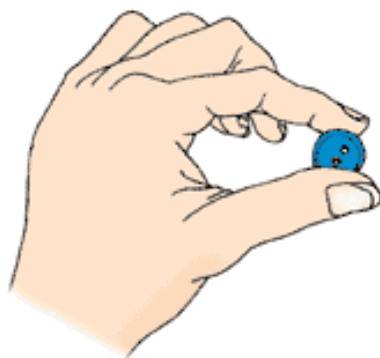
Ulnar Collateral Ligament Sprain (Skier's Thumb) Exercises



Thumb range of motion



Wrist active range of motion



Thumb strengthening



Grip strengthening

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