

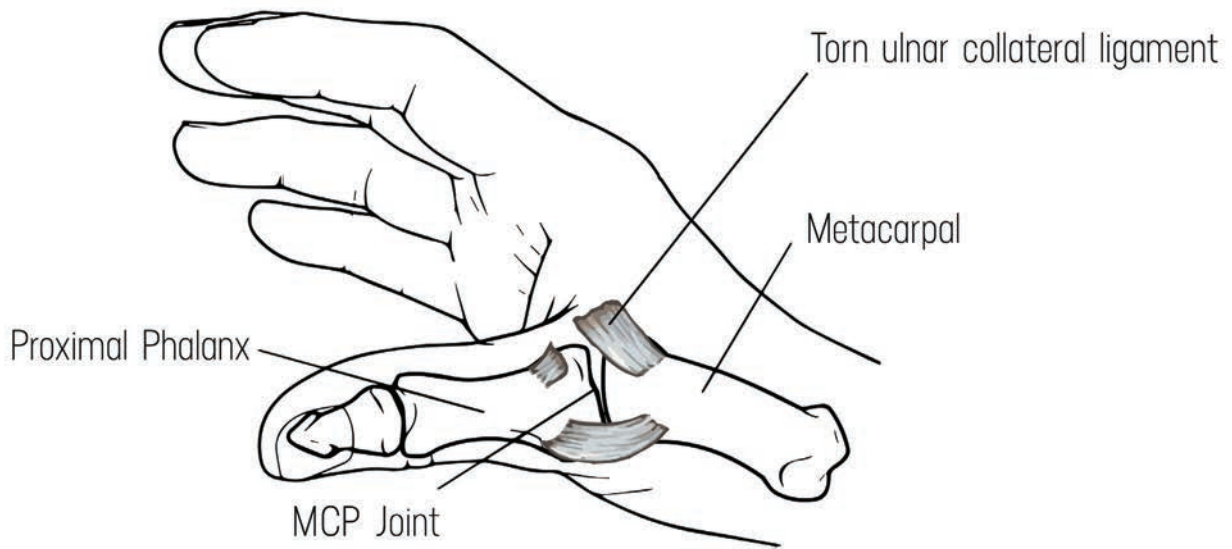


ULNAR COLLATERAL LIGAMENT INJURY OF THE THUMB

ABOUT

Ulnar collateral ligament injury of the thumb occurs when the thumb is overstretched away from the hand causing a sprain, partial or full tear to one of the ligaments that stabilise the thumb. It can occur after a single forceful incident (e.g. ball to the thumb or a fall), which can be called Skier's Thumb. This is named after the injury occurring due to a fall with a ski pole in the hand. It may also occur due to ongoing overuse of the thumb which can be called Gamekeeper's Thumb, named for the historical injury that occurred with repetitive handling of wild game caught during hunting.

THUMB MCJ UCL



SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of an ulnar collateral ligament injury may include pain, tenderness and swelling around the side of the thumb closest to the fingers. The thumb may also feel weak, sore or unstable on loading such as pinching or trying to grasp an object.

The treating doctor may recommend an x-ray, ultrasound or other medical imaging to help determine the extent of the ulnar collateral ligament injury and rule out other possible diagnoses. In more severe cases a hand and upper limb surgeon may be needed to determine whether the injury requires surgery to allow it to heal. However many cases do not require surgery and will be referred for hand therapy.

HOW HAND THERAPY CAN HELP

Therapists will assess the thumb through discussion about the history of the injury, observation and feeling the joint. The thumb will often need to be placed in an orthosis (support) to immobilise it for approximately 4-6 weeks full time, followed by a period of protective orthosis wear. Your therapist will custom make the orthosis to allow the ideal fit and positioning of the injured joint.

After this time, the therapist can assist with exercises that will aim to regain movement and strength. The therapist will offer advice and support to aid return to usual functional activities including housework, childminding, gardening, work, sports and other recreational pursuits.

*HAND THERAPY IS THE
ART AND SCIENCE OF
REHABILITATION FOR THE UPPER
LIMB - SHOULDER TO HAND*

*The Australian Hand Therapy
Association provides support
for its members through
continuing education, professional
development, networking and
representation at
state and national levels.*



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