

## Thumb Sprain



Thumb sprain or Ulnar Collateral Ligament injury is the most common ligament to be injured in the thumb. It occurs commonly in sports and falls. Most common sports injuries that causes ulnar collateral sprains are football, skiing etc. They are also known as gamekeepers thumb and skiers thumb.

The skiers injury occurs when a skier falls and the pole acts as a fulcrum in the hand to bend the thumb in an extreme position.

In gamekeepers thumb the ligament is injured by jamming the thumb on the ground when falling or on the ball or another player

The thumb is jammed into another player, the ground or the ball.

The thumb usually swells and my show bruising and be painful to movement.

**Saba Kamal** has over 18+years of experience as a clinician. She has worked as an Occupational Therapist and a Certified Hand Therapist. In addition, she did her Fellowship in Hand Therapy from Texas Woman's University, in Houston with Baylor alliance.

o She has presented several talks at Local and National level conferences (ASHT: American Society of Hand Therapists and IFSHT: International Federation of Societies of Hand Therapists).

o She has contributed to a book on Arthritis, presented to support groups etc.

o She was the President of the California Chapter of ASHT & has won the best chapter award for her term in 2010 & 2011.

o She is a partner/principal in Advanced Rehab Seminars & provides continuing education seminars to other hand & upper extremity therapists nationwide.

## Hands-on-Care

499 Blossom Hill Rd,  
San Jose, Ca 95123  
Phone: 408-268-8536 Fax: 408-268-8727

2242 Camden Ave, Ste 201  
San Jose, CA 95124  
Tel: 408-884-8361 Fax: 408-884-8359

[www.HandsonCareTherapy.com](http://www.HandsonCareTherapy.com)

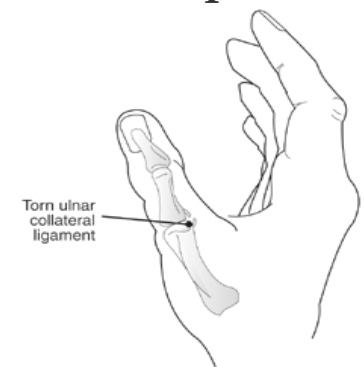


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## Thumb Sprains



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The diagnostic tests done to diagnose this injury are X-rays to make sure the bones of the thumb and hand are not fractured. Your doctor may examine the thumb to determine whether the ligament is

torn.

There are 3 grades of ligament injury.

Grade I is determined as pain at the site of the ligament but joint is stable.

A ligament may be partially torn but still stable to be qualified as Grade II injury.

Grade III is where the joint is inherently unstable and can be dislocated. The ends of a completely torn UCL often gets trapped behind a tendon.

To confirm the diagnosis and the extent of injury an MRI can be obtained.



## Symptoms

In addition to pain and swelling in the thumb, chronic injuries may present with pain with pinching, joint may feel loose and strength reduced in the affected hand.

## Treatment

Treatment varies with the grade of injury

Grade I and II can be treated in a hand based removal thermoplastic thumb spica splint for 3-4 weeks post injury.

The splint can then be weaned to a soft thumb spica splint.



The patient is educated on avoiding pinching activities initially, for eg. Writing. Writing may stress the injured ligament. Alternative ways can be provided by the therapist to avoid stressing the ligament and thus promote healing.

Avoiding activities that require spreading

the thumb out, eg. Holding a wide jar or cup can stress the ligament and prevent healing.

Grade III injuries are treated with surgery to



repair the ligament or reconstruct the ligament if the remaining ligament tissue is of poor quality.

The patient is referred to therapy 4 weeks post surgery and is placed in a removable thermoplastic splint by your therapists. You are allowed to remove the splint for ADL's and exercise.

Your therapists will teach you scar management and ROM exercises without stressing the repair. Precautions remain the same as in conservative management.

You will slowly be introduced to strengthening exercises with the correct pinch pattern.