

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Hand and Wrist Ligament Injuries

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

My patients seem to lump tendons and ligaments together. Patients have a general idea that they hold things together, in this case in the hand and wrist. Ligaments in the hand and wrist are much smaller than tendons, but provide a vital function in keeping the 27 bones together and working as a unit.

Consider for a moment your hand as an amazing instrument. It can perform an unlimited variety of tasks. The skeleton of the hand and wrist allows for a combination of great mobility and strength.

Your hands are the key tools used in most daily activities. They are also especially prone to injury and among the most common injuries I see in the office and hospital.

- Ligaments

They are fibrous tissue that connects bone to bone. Ligaments can be sprained or completely torn. Sprains are more common and come in many varieties.

Minor sprains may cause only a small amount of swelling and discomfort. Severe ligament injuries can completely tear away from the bone and sometimes fracture off a small chip of bone in the process. These limit wrist movement and cause significant pain, swelling and bruising. Surgery may be needed to repair the ligament or to pin bones together while the ligament heals.

- Mallet finger

Caused by a blow against the fingertip causing a significant drooping of the outer joint. Splinting or pinning required.

- Finger joint dislocation

Usually needs to be reduced and usually splinted for 3 weeks

- Thumb injury

Often seen in falls on the hand. Thumb becomes very loose and requires a splint or cast for 4 - 6 weeks

- Mid wrist deep ligament tear

Can occur from a fall on the outstretched hand or wrist. A serious injury often needing MRI to diagnose and surgery to repair.

- TFCC Injury

A little disc of tough tissue on the little finger side of the wrist which is often misdiagnosed and hard to treat. It's like a cartilage in the knee. It can wear out and tear or tear with injury and causes a lot of problems. Arthroscopic surgery is often needed to fix it.

- Scaphoid bone fracture

Not a ligament problem but a very common wrist injury that can cause untold misery if not diagnosed early. It is one of the eight wrist (carpal) bones. Typically a person falls on their outstretched hand. Ouch. Patient goes to an Urgent Care due to pain. X-rays are done and said to be "negative". Pain and stiffness continue. I see the patient at some point and there is a fracture not visible on original films. Moral: even though x-rays are "negative" the wrist has to be casted from the beginning if a fracture of the scaphoid is strongly suspected.

That is a lot of information about injuries in a small area. But, go back and read the second paragraph again.

See you next time and have a good week.

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Dr. Haverbush