

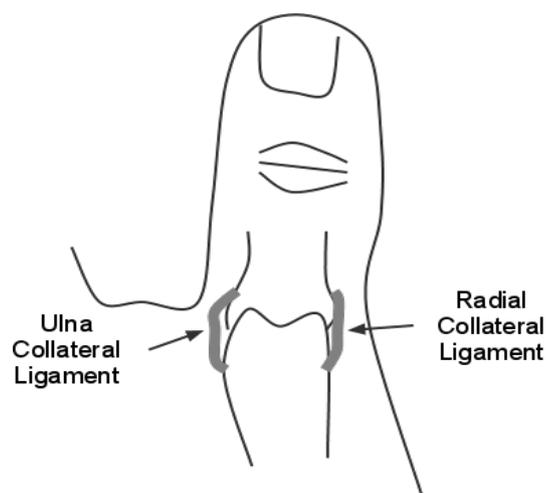
Thumb injury

You have attended the Emergency Department with a thumb injury/ sprain. This leaflet explains how to care for your injury at home.

What is a sprained thumb?

A sprain is an injury to a ligament. A ligament attaches a bone to a bone.

Injury is usually caused during sport, when the thumb is bent back. The symptoms are pain on movement, tenderness around the joint at the base of the thumb. Swelling and bruising of the muscle at the base of the thumb.



How is the sprain diagnosed?

The doctor or nurse practitioner may x-ray your thumb to rule out an injury to the bone and will test that the ligaments are not completely ruptured.

Discharge advice

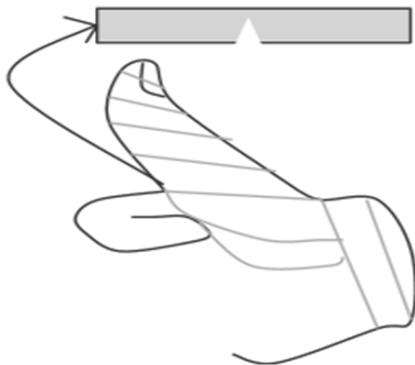
- During the first 24 to 48 hours following injury elevate your thumb to reduce bleeding and swelling, apply ice (wrapped in a cloth) for short periods, 20 minutes every one to two hours.
- It is also advisable to take regular painkillers during this period. If you are already taking medicines from your doctor please consult a pharmacist prior to taking any over the counter medicines.
- After this period you need to start moving your thumb to prevent stiffness and preserve joint mobility. Your thumb is the most important and unique digit of the hand, it is responsible for hand functions, grasp, manual dexterity and fine motor skill.
- Your thumb injury may be strapped using elastic tape called a thumb spica. This supports your injured thumb whilst it is healing. You may need to have it reapplied and the diagram on the next page should help you do that. As long as it feels comfortable and supportive and is not too tight, applying the thumb spica does not have to be too exact.



1. Cut three lengths of elastic tape, each slightly longer than the previous one.



2. Starting at the nail, wrap the tape across the thumb crossing in a "V" over the base of the nail.
3. Each wrap should cover about half of the previous one.



4. Cut a "V" in the tape when you get to the base of the thumb to prevent it getting too bulky. Bring the tape down over the muscle at the base of the thumb and secure with a length of tape around the wrist.

Other important advice

The loss of function due to injury can be debilitating until it heals. Even when it is pain-free during normal activities it may remain painful when stressed for a long time following your injury.

- This leaflet gives general advice only, it may take 6-8 weeks for your thumb to return to normal.
- If you are unable to maintain a strong grasp, you should not drive.
- Before returning to sport, ensure that your thumb is pain-free, strong and supple.
- If you develop new symptoms or are concerned see your GP or return to the Emergency Department.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question – *How likely are you to recommend our service to family and friends if they needed similar care or treatment?* - by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-in-touch/friends-and-family-survey.htm.

Further information

More information is available on the Trust website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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