



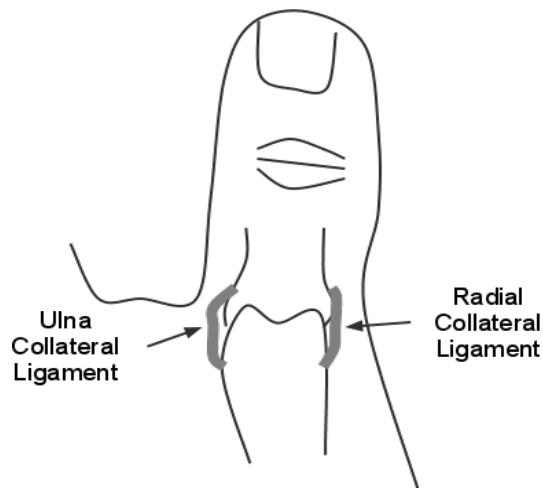
# Thumb injury

**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 advanced 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, 10-20 minutes at a time with at least 30 minutes in between applications, to allow the limb to feel warm to the touch and have normal sensation before reapplying.
- 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 may have a Velcro splint applied. The practitioner will advise you when you can remove it.

## 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 is 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 completing the Friends & Family test by going online [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/friends-and-family-test/](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/friends-and-family-test/) or using the link sent to you in an SMS text message.

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

RBFT Emergency Department

Reviewed: December 2025

Next review due: December 2027