

# THUMB SPRAIN

## What is a thumb sprain?

A thumb sprain is an injury to your thumb joint that causes a stretch or tear in a ligament. A ligament is a strong band of tissue connecting one bone to another.

## How does it occur?

A sprain usually occurs when there is an accident. For example, a ball may hit the tip of your thumb or you may fall forcefully onto your thumb.

## What are the symptoms?

You usually have pain, swelling, and tenderness in your thumb.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will examine your thumb. You may have an X-ray to make sure you have not broken any bones.

## How is it treated?

Treatment may include:

- putting ice packs on your thumb for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for 2 or 3 days or until the pain goes away

- elevating your injured hand on a pillow when you are lying down or on the back of a chair or couch when you are sitting
- taking an anti-inflammatory or other pain medicine prescribed by your healthcare provider
- doing exercises to strengthen your thumb during the healing process
- you may have to wear a splint on your thumb for 1 to 4 weeks after your injury

## When can I return to my sport or activity?

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to your sport or activity will be determined by how soon your thumb recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to get better.

Your thumb may remain swollen with decreased range of motion and strength for many weeks. It is important to continue your rehabilitation exercises during this time and even after you return to your sport. In many cases you will be able to return to your activities as long as you are wearing your splint or have your thumb taped.

## THUMB SPRAIN REHABILITATION EXERCISES

If you have had surgery or if you have been in a cast or splint, you may do these exercises when your healthcare provider says you are ready.

**1. THUMB ACTIVE RANGE OF MOTION:** With your palm flat on a table or other surface, move your thumb away from your hand as far you can. Hold this position for 5 seconds and bring it back to the starting position. Rest your hand on the table in a handshake position. Move your thumb out to the side away from your palm as far as possible. Hold for 5 seconds. Return to the starting position. Next, bring your thumb across your palm toward your little finger. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat this entire sequence 10 times. Do 3 sets.



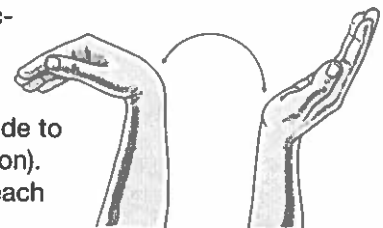
THUMB ACTIVE RANGE OF MOTION

### 2. WRIST RANGE OF MOTION

A. Flexion: Gently bend your wrist forward. Hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.

B. Extension: Gently bend your wrist backward. Hold this position 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.

C. Side to side: Gently move your wrist from side to side (a handshake motion). Hold for 5 seconds at each end. Do 3 sets of 10.



WRIST ACTIVE RANGE OF MOTION

**3. THUMB STRENGTHENING:** Pick up small objects such as paper clips, pencils, and coins using your thumb and each of your other fingers one at a time. Practice this exercise for about 5 minutes.

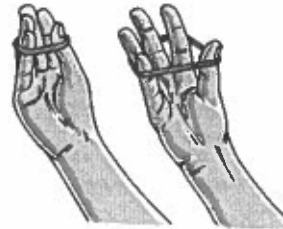


THUMB STRENGTHENING

**4. GRIP STRENGTHENING:** Squeeze a rubber ball and hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.



GRIP STRENGTHENING



**5. FINGER SPRING:** Place a large rubber band around the outside of your thumb and the rest of your fingers. Open your fingers to stretch the rubber band. Do 3 sets of 10.

FINGER SPRING