

# Thumb Sprain

## ***What is a thumb sprain?***

A sprain is an injury to a joint that causes a stretch or tear in a ligament. Ligaments are strong bands of tissue that connect 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 have pain, swelling, and tenderness in your thumb.

## ***How is it diagnosed?***

Your health care provider will examine your thumb. You may have an x-ray to be sure you have not broken any bones in your thumb.

## ***How is it treated?***

Treatment may include:

- ▶ applying ice packs to 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 hand on a pillow while you are lying down or on the back of a chair or couch while you are sitting (to help reduce swelling)
- ▶ taking an anti-inflammatory or other pain medication prescribed by your health care provider

- ▶ doing exercises to strengthen your thumb during the healing process.

Your health care provider will recommend that your sprained thumb be splinted 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 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.

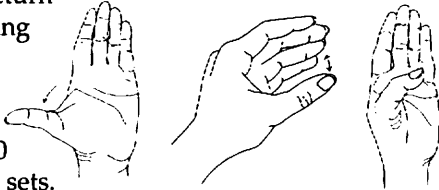
## ***How I prevent a thumb sprain?***

Thumb sprains are usually the result of injuries that are not preventable.

## Thumb Sprain Rehabilitation Exercises

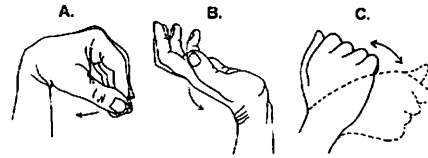
If you have had surgery or if you have been in a cast or splint, you may do these exercises when your health care provider says you are ready.

**1. THUMB 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.

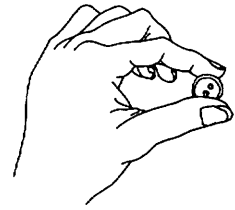


### 3. WRIST: ACTIVE RANGE OF MOTION

- 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.



**4. 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.



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

