

Scapholunate (SL) Wrist Ligament Injury

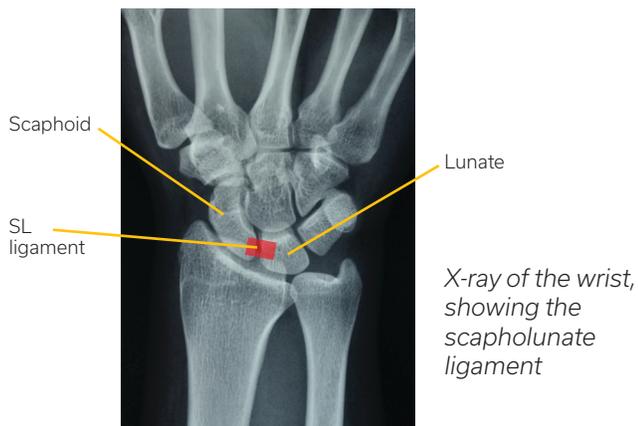


"Working with a knowledgeable hand therapist can make the difference between success and failure in complex hand surgical cases. The therapist extends the continuum of our care, as well as functioning as coach and trainer for our patients."

MARYBETH EZAKI, MD, PAST PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR SURGERY OF THE HAND

What is a scapholunate (SL) ligament injury?

The wrist is comprised of eight small bones called carpals. Two of the carpal bones are the scaphoid (close to the thumb) and the lunate (near the center of the wrist). The scapholunate (SL) ligament connects the two bones together to help keep the wrist stable for activities that involve heavy gripping or pushing. When part of the ligament is damaged, it is called a sprain. If the ligament is severely damaged, it may tear completely resulting in a rupture.

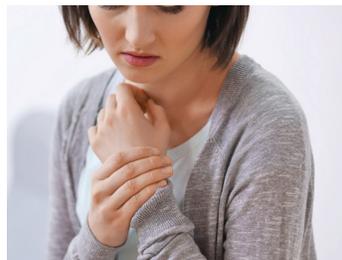


What are the symptoms of an SL ligament injury?

The most common symptoms of a SL ligament injury are pain on the thumb side of the hand or on the back of the wrist. Initially, the pain may not be so severe, but a dull ache may linger and worsen with use. If the pain does not go away, medical attention may be needed. The wrist may also be swollen and pop or click with movement.

What are the causes of an SL ligament injury?

The most common cause of an SL ligament injury involves a sudden fall onto the palm of the hand. Less frequent SL injuries may occur when a heavy load is applied the wrist, such as in gymnastics or using a jackhammer.



Wrist pain is a symptom of an SL ligament injury

What is the treatment for an SL ligament injury?

Treatment for an SL ligament injury depends on the severity. For a sprain, immobilizing the wrist for a period of time and avoiding gripping/pushing is standard treatment. A rupture of the SL ligament may require surgery.

What can a hand therapist do for me?

A hand therapist may fabricate a custom orthosis to immobilize the wrist. Regaining the movement and strength of the wrist will be the focus of treatment. A hand therapist and surgeon will work together to achieve the best outcome.



Example of an orthosis to immobilize the wrist for an SL ligament injury