

“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.”

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What is a TFCC injury?

The wrist joint is made up of the two long bones of the forearm (the radius and ulna) and eight small wrist (carpal) bones. A supportive structure called the triangular fibrocartilage complex (TFCC) connects the ulna to the carpal bones, making the joint stronger and more stable. A TFCC injury is any injury to the disk, ligaments or tendon that make up the triangular fibrocartilage complex.



What causes a TFCC injury?

Typically, a TFCC injury is caused by either falling down on the palm of the hand or during activities that combine firm gripping and forearm rotation, such as using a screwdriver. A TFCC injury may also come on gradually because of changes in the wrist joint, like those that occur with arthritis or after a bone fracture.



Example of firm gripping with forearm rotation

What are the symptoms of a TFCC injury?

The symptoms of a TFCC injury include pain on the pinky side of the wrist that can worsen with gripping, moving the wrist in the direction of the pinky (such as when reaching to strike keys when typing) and forearm rotation (such as turning a doorknob). Loss of wrist motion, weakness of grip, swelling and wrist clicking may also occur with a TFCC injury.



Area of TFCC pain on the wrist

What is the treatment of a TFCC injury?

If a doctor suspects a TFCC injury exists, an MRI may be done to view the tissue. Some cases of TFCC injury require protection and therapy until healing occurs, while others may require surgery.



Example of TFCC orthosis

What can a hand therapist do for me?

A hand therapist works directly with a doctor to assist in treating a TFCC injury. A custom orthosis may be made to support the wrist and protect the TFCC. The hand therapist will also provide education on reducing pain, decreasing swelling and improving motion, strength and function of the wrist.