



SKIER'S THUMB LIGAMENT SURGERY

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THE DAY OF SURGERY:

Welcome! We will try to make your experience as easy as possible. Please leave valuables at home, but the surgery centers do require photo ID. Remove all rings and jewelry. Wear comfortable clothes. The surgery centers often don't know their final schedule until 1-2 days prior, so your arrival time and surgery time may change. Please confirm your arrival time with your surgery facility the day before your surgery, if you haven't heard from them (please see page 6 for the phone numbers).

We most commonly use **one of two types of anesthesia**, and the instructions for before surgery are different depending on which type of anesthesia you selected:

- **If Arm Block Anesthesia** (also known as a regional block, axillary block, or supraclavicular block):
 - **With Arm Block Anesthesia**, you will get an IV and IV sedation, as described above, and then the anesthesiologist will make your entire upper limb numb by blocking the nerves near your arm pit or collar bone. The anesthesiologist will discuss all aspects of your anesthesia with you in consultation, in the pre-op room before surgery. After the block is placed, you will be given more medication in the operating room by the anesthesia team to make you sleepy. Generally they do not put you completely asleep, but rather you will drift off to sleep and can be completely unaware of the surgery, if you want. You can discuss how sleepy or unaware you want to be with your anesthesia team in the pre-op area before surgery. If the block is not making your arm fully numb then you might go to sleep as well, with a general anesthetic. You may start to wake up when we are finishing with the surgery and putting on the bandages, and the sedation medicine usually wears off quite quickly. You will generally have no pain, and the numbing medication usually lasts about 8 or more hours, so you will leave the surgery center with no pain. How long the block lasts is very variable, but the anesthesia team will give you an estimate. Occasionally there might still be some residual numbing or tingling effect even the next day. You need a sling to protect your arm until the block wears off.
- **If General Anesthesia** (also known as Conscious Sedation or Twilight Anesthesia):
 - **With General Anesthesia**, you will get an IV and then given medication so that you will be completely asleep during the surgery. Once you are asleep, I will

completely numb the surgery site with the local anesthetic, so you will generally wake up with no pain. The numbing medication usually lasts about 4-6 hours, so you will leave the surgery center with no pain. Occasionally there might still be some residual numbing or tingling effect even the next day.

- **With Arm Block Anesthesia OR General Anesthesia**, you will need to:
 - Have nothing to eat or drink for at least 8 hours prior to your surgery.
 - You can and should take your usual important medications with a sip of water on the day of your surgery.
 - If there is ANY chance that you are pregnant please do a pregnancy test the day before surgery and notify the surgery center. If you have Type 1 insulin dependent diabetes, please let me know and consult pre-operatively with your endocrinologist or family doctor. The plan generally includes taking all or half of your lantus or long-acting insulin the night before surgery, or continuing your normal basal rate on your pump overnight. Then depending on your morning blood sugar levels, either continue or lessen your basal rate so you don't get low. You may need to check your glucose more often than normal. Even without eating before surgery your blood sugar can rise due to the normal stress of surgery. You can continue wearing your pump during the procedure. Bring your meter, etc to the surgery center. If you do get low, of course take something, preferably glucose tabs or hard candy, or juice/coke if needed.
 - You will need a driver to take you home, and a "responsible adult" to go over the post-op instructions with you at the surgery center, and stay with you that day after surgery.
 - You should not return to work or the office or attend meetings on the same day of your surgery.

DURING SKIER'S THUMB LIGAMENT SURGERY - WHAT IS DONE:

A ligament is a short piece of gristly rope that crosses a joint and helps hold the joint together, giving the joint stability. The ligaments of the thumb metacarpal-phalangeal (MCP) joint are commonly torn (sprained) during sports or other injuries, and it gets the name Skier's Thumb from the common mechanism of falling on the thumb while holding a ski pole. The torn thumb ligament is repaired or reconstructed during surgery. Through a small incision along the side of the thumb joint, we will see where the ligament was torn. Usually it is pulled off of the bone (proximal phalanx) on the nail side of the joint. Occasionally it is torn from the other side (metacarpal) or torn in its middle. If possible we will reattach the ligament directly to the bone from where it was torn, with sutures directly into the bone. If a repair of the ligament is not possible, we can make a new ligament by using a piece of tendon graft from your forearm and anchoring it to both sides of the joint. Ligaments heal slowly, taking a minimum of three months to strongly heal to bone. So we usually put a temporary pin across the joint, as well as a cast, to hold the joint still while the ligament is healing. There will be deep sutures that are permanent, and skin sutures, and a splint/cast.

AFTER SKIER'S THUMB LIGAMENT SURGERY:

- **Bandage/splint/surgical dressing care**
 - Please keep your hand elevated as much and as often as possible for 3-4 days after surgery. This helps reduce swelling, and your hand may throb and feel worse if it is hanging down. This is very important!
 - In bed at night you can easily keep your hand comfortably elevated by wrapping a thin pillow around your forearm, and secure it with tape or an ace wrap or a safety pin, then place your elbow on another pillow. The wrapped pillow will hold your arm upright for you, with your elbow bent at a right angle.
 - Please keep your surgical bandage on and clean and dry until your post-operative appointment.
 - You may shower/bath, but keep the bandage dry. You can use a plastic bag taped up at the end, saran wrap or press-n-seal.
 - If you had a full arm block, you need a sling to protect your arm until the block wears off, but still try to elevate it as much as possible.
- **Hand Therapy Exercises**
 - I want you to move any and all unsplinted digits and joints as much and as often as you are able. Speed doesn't help, but try to get the full excursion (range of motion), moving them slowly and as far as they can go. You can use your other hand to help them. Also, please move your shoulder through its full range of motion, often. We don't want anything to get stiff.
- **Hand Use**
 - You will not be able to use the hand much at all initially after surgery. It is OK to use your fingers fully as much as you are able. Typing, writing, eating, dressing are Ok to do. You will not be able to do any strong gripping or grasping, pulling or pushing, or operating of power tools. It will hurt if you overuse it, so just go by how your hand feels.
- **Ice**
 - While ice is generally good for the first 2 days after any surgery or injury, it is not very effective to ice the injured area directly because of the splint. You can try icing on the outside of the bandage or above the bandage on the forearm, but it is not necessary.
- **Pain Management Expectations**
 - Your thumb will be likely be pain free when you leave the surgery center, and the numbing effect of the arm block will likely last 8-20 hours but is variable. Occasionally there might still be some numbing/tingling effect from the block even the next day. I recommend starting the pain medicine before the block wears off. Additionally, if you were given a medication called gabapentin before your surgery you may have a prescription to continue it three times a day for 2 weeks after surgery.
- **Pain Medications**
 - There are three types of pain pills. All three types can be taken together, and at the same time. Their pain-relieving effects are additive.
 - **Tylenol (acetaminophen)**
 - Non-narcotic, safe
 - Inexpensive, comes in generic
 - Regular strength is 325mg
 - Extra-strength is 500mg

- The dose is 1000mg 3-4 times per day.
- Many over the counter pain and cold preparations contain acetaminophen. It is also a fever reducer.
- **Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)**
 - Ibuprofen (Advil)
 - Sold over the counter as 200mg pills
 - Inexpensive, comes in generics
 - Can take 1-3 pills every 6 hours or up to four times per day (lasts 6 hours)
 - Do not take if you are already taking a prescription NSAID (there are many) as there is just extra risk and no extra pain relief.
 - Do not take both ibuprofen and naproxen at the same time
 - Naproxen (Aleve)
 - Sold over the counter as 220mg pills
 - Inexpensive, comes in generics
 - Can take 1-2 pills twice a day (lasts 12 hours)
 - Do not take if you are already taking a prescription NSAID (there are many) as there is just extra risk and no extra pain relief.
- **Narcotics**
 - Require a doctor's written prescription and generally cannot be refilled over a weekend or holiday.
 - Fairly safe for short-term use.
 - All types can become habit forming and addicting.
 - You can build up a tolerance to narcotics over time, meaning if you continue to take them long-term it takes a higher dose to produce the same effect (like alcohol).
 - They affect different people differently (like alcohol)
 - All are constipating. Best to take a stool softener (colace) and a bulk agent (metamucil, fiber, prunes) if you are susceptible to constipation or are taking these medications beyond a week.
 - All can cause some itching.
 - All can cause some nausea.
 - All are sedatives that cause varying degrees of sleepiness that can interfere with driving and decision making, and can cause unsteadiness and lightheadedness.
 - Best not combine narcotics with alcohol or other narcotics
 - Are often sold in a combination pill with acetaminophen (Tylenol).
 - Commonly used narcotic medications are:
 - Tramadol (Ultram)
 - 1 pill every 6 hours as needed
 - Generally the lightest and best tolerated with the least unpleasant side-effects
 - Hydrocodone with acetaminophen (Vicodin, Norco, Lortab)
 - 1-2 pills every 4-6 hours as needed

- This medication requires the actual written prescription for any refill and cannot be called in.
 - Oxycodone with acetaminophen (Percocet, roxicet)
 - 1-2 pills every 4-6 hours as needed
 - This medication requires the actual written prescription for any refill and cannot be called in.
- **Exercise (fitness)**
 - It is OK and beneficial to remain active after your surgery. Walking is good, and you can elevate your hand while walking.
 - For the next three months, it is OK to continue any kind of aerobic fitness routine, but you will not be able to do any strenuous activities with your thumb.
 - It is generally OK to do any exercise if you are able to do it comfortably, letting pain be your guide, while wearing your cast or brace.
- **Driving**
 - It is OK to drive a car if you can do it safely with your other hand and you are not on narcotic medication. Most people are able to drive a manual transmission. You cannot drive a motorcycle or snowmobile for 3 months.
- **Work**
 - Most people are off work for about a week, and then on light, restricted-duty work restrictions for the operated thumb for about 12 weeks post-op. People are different, and their job demands are different, so your exact return to work plan will be individualized for you, and should be discussed ahead of time. Almost everyone can get back to doing their usual job eventually, without restrictions. Permanent restrictions are very unusual.
- **Diet/food/eating**
 - You can resume your usual diet, and there is no need for anything special or for any supplements. Smoking, or the use of any nicotine-containing product, can slow and delay wound and ligament healing.
- **Problems**
 - Please call us if you have:
 - Fever over 101.5 for more than a day
 - Foul smelling drainage from the dressing or wound
 - Excessive bleeding
 - Uncontrolled pain
 - Please seek ER evaluation or treatment if you have:
 - Persistent vomiting
 - Inability to void (urinate) for more than 8-10 hours after surgery
 - Shortness of breath or chest pain
 - Severe allergic reaction

YOUR FIRST POST- OPERATIVE VISIT:

Your first visit back after surgery will be with the Hand Therapist or me, usually 5-8 days after surgery. The bandage will be removed, sutures often removed, and you will be placed in a small cast for your thumb. You will then work on getting back all of your finger and thumb tip

motion. It is OK to use your hand lightly as you are able, but you will not be using the thumb for any significant pinch or grasp. About 4 weeks after surgery, the cast will be removed, the pin removed in the clinic, and the hand therapist will make you a removable, light-weight plastic protective thumb splint. You will then start exercises to work out the stiffness, and you will be able to get it wet then. Updated work slips will be issued at each and every clinic visit with me, as needed.

Charges for all post-op doctor visits within 90 days of surgery are generally included with the surgery “global fee”. Charges for X-rays, splints, casts, supplies, medications and Hand Therapy visits are often not included in the surgery “global fee”. For questions about your bill from Twin Cities Orthopedics, please contact our Customer Service Department at 952-512-5625.

QUESTIONS?:

- For questions about your medical condition or surgery please contact me or Julie (my Hand Therapist) through our Care Coordinator Sarah at 952-456-7084.
- For questions about scheduling, insurance, paperwork, or work slips please call Sarah, our Care Coordinator, at 952-456-7084.
- For prescription refills please call Sarah at 952-456-7084.
- For questions about surgery arrival time or other day-of-surgery questions please contact your Surgery Center location directly.
 - Crosstown Surgery Center: 952-456-7333
 - WestHealth Surgery Center: 763-302-2863
 - Abbott Northwestern Hospital: 612-863-3138
- For after-hours medical urgent questions please reach the on-call Orthopedic Surgeon at 952-920-0970.
- Our Walk-In Access Clinic, TCO Orthopedic Urgent Care, is open every day at the Edina location from 8:00 am – 8:00 pm, for urgent problems with your cast or other urgent post-op problems. It is also open from 8am – 8pm on Saturday and Sunday. For any of the many other metro locations and hours for our Urgent Care centers, please visit our website www.tcomn.com.
- For billing questions, please call TCO Customer Service at 952-512-5625.
- For questions about your surgery center bill, co-pays or out-of-pocket costs please call your specific surgery center directly (above).
- For questions about your anesthesia bill, please call your anesthesia provided directly.

THANK YOU!