



MRI scan wrist joint

Wrist Ligament Injuries

At the wrist joint, there are two rows of small bones called the carpal bones that are interconnected by a complex arrangement of ligaments.

Injuries to the wrist can sprain or tear these ligaments. Some injuries require immobilisation and some require surgery.

The length of time that it takes the ligament to heal is approximately eight weeks and then there is usually a period of stiffness when rehabilitation is required and physiotherapy may be necessary.

One of the most significant ligament injuries is to the scapholunate ligament, which links two of the key bones in the wrist joint. If this is sprained it can take

up to nine months to become asymptomatic and activities may need to be modified during this period. If the ligament is torn completely it may require surgical reconstruction.

This is a significant operation and involves using a tendon to stiffen the wrist to compensate for the ligament that has been torn. The surgery can be performed as a day case procedure under block and sedation or general anaesthetic but the rehabilitation period involves eight weeks of immobilisation followed by physiotherapy. During this time patients have their thumb and fingers free and so will be able to use a computer and a telephone but it may restrict their activities for driving and their work, depending on what they do.

As the arrangements of ligaments around the wrist is so complex it is often necessary to obtain x-rays and MRI scans to obtain a full diagnosis before knowing the best way to treat the particular injury.

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