

Thumb Fracture

Broken thumbs are a serious issue. It can affect your ability to be able to grasp an item. Broken thumbs can also increase the likelihood of your getting arthritis later on down the line. Even though breaks can occur in any of the bones in the thumb, the most serious of all breaks are those near the joints, which is especially true when the break happens near the wrist at the base of the thumb.

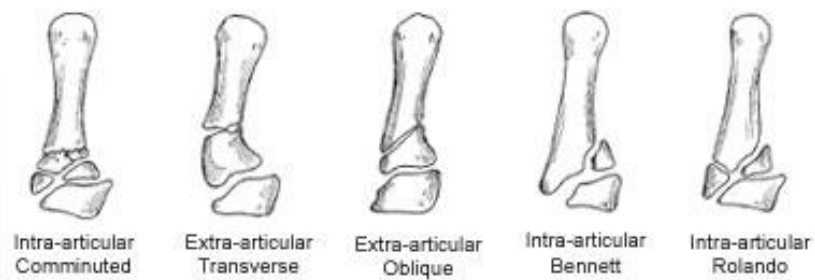
There are specific types of thumb fractures, depending on what type of break occurs. Fractures involving joints are a lot more difficult to treat and are also prone to an unfavorable outcome.

Thumb fractures are not particularly common, with thumb dislocations and sprains being more common. Fingers are much more likely to get fractured, and the healing tends to be quite straightforward when a finger is fractured. Also more commonly is a fractured scaphoid. The scaphoid sits next to the bottom of the thumb, and is usually caused by a fall on an outstretched arm. This will give pain between the thumb and the wrist.

Thumb Fracture Anatomy

The thumb is first and most important digit in the hand. The human thumb has rotated 90 degrees, and this sets us apart from most mammals. This rotation of the thumb has allowed man to use tools which has been essential for human evolution. Experts say that if you were to lose your thumb, you lose 75% of the function of the arm. Without the thumb, using the hand becomes very limited.

There are two bones in the thumb. The first one is the distal phalange extending from the top of the thumb and down to the knuckle. The second one is the proximal phalange extending from the knuckle down to the base of the thumb. This is the webbed area located between the first finger and the thumb. The thumb is connected to a bone in the hand.



How to Treat a Thumb Fracture:

1. Casting

If the fragments from the fracture haven't moved a lot, or the break is located close to the middle part of the bone, you might be able to use a special cast to hold all of the fragments in position. The cast might have to be worn for a minimum of four to six weeks. During the course of time the cast is on, regular x-rays can help make sure the bone is staying aligned.

2. Surgery

Depending on where the fracture is located in the bone and the degree of movement between the bone fragments, surgery might be required. The surgeon might use one of many different fixation techniques to help realign the bone fragments. The fragments have to be held in place to allow the bone time to heal.

After surgery, you will have to wear a splint or cast for two to six weeks. Once the cast is removed, you will probably have to go through hand therapy to help restore movement. Expect to spend three months or more regaining movement in the hand, depending on how severe the injury is.

3. Rehab:

Following any injury to the thumb, it is essential you seek help from a rehab therapist. Often that will be a physiotherapist, with some physio's specializing in hand injuries. Rehabilitation may involve splinting, casting, or taping the thumb to protect it. This is followed by improving range of movement and reducing inflammation. Once the inflammation has gone, the thumb can be strengthened. The big problem during rehabilitation is reducing the stiffness which can take between 10-20 treatments. Home exercises will also be prescribed.

Tips:

- When falling, avoid placing your hand out in front of you in an attempt to catch yourself.
- Thumb fractures commonly occur when catching a ball and having your thumb pulled back.
- Wrestling, skiing, playing football and hockey have all been known to cause thumb fractures.
- Those with a history of bone disease and calcium deficiency are at an increased risk of fracturing bones.
- Make sure to use proper equipment when playing in any sporting activities.