

# J. Clinton Walker, MD

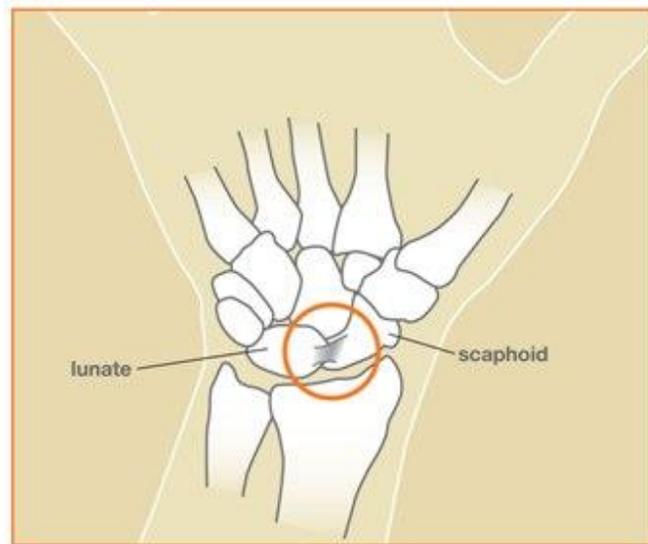
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*If you have any questions or concerns, call the office.*



## **Scapholunate Ligament Tear**

Ligaments are strong bands of tissue which connect bone to bone. The Scapholunate Ligament connects the scaphoid bone to the lunate bone in the wrist. The scaphoid and lunate bones are two of the eight small bones of the wrist call carpal bones. Ligaments help to stabilize the normal alignment of these bones in the wrist.

Injury to a ligament can range from a mild sprain (partial tear) to a complete tear. A complete Scapholunate Ligament tear can result in abnormal gapping between the scaphoid and lunate bones allowing the bones to rotate abnormally- the scaphoid rotating forward, and the lunate rotating backwards. A sprain can be treated with immobilization; however, a complete tear should be treated surgically.

## **Surgery**

An incision is made on the back of the wrist and pins are inserted to hold the bones in place. Intra-operative x-ray is used to confirm the alignment while the Scapholunate Ligament is repaired using sutures anchored to the bone. Healing of the Scapholunate Ligament takes approximately 3 months.

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This procedure is usually performed under general anesthesia which means you will be asleep for the procedure. Your procedure will take approximately 4 to 5 hours- including recovery time. You will also be required to have a driver the day of surgery.

## **What to expect after surgery**

Depending on your job duties, you may be able to return to work under certain restrictions- provided you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication (You may transition into over the counter Tylenol, Ibuprofen, or Aleve for your symptoms as tolerated). You will need to avoid heavy lifting and submerging your hand in water. We suggest you speak with your employer regarding job demands to agree on an expected time of return.

Pain medication will be prescribed for post-operative pain relief. You will slowly wean from this medication over time as your symptoms subside. You may also experience some bruising and/or swelling. These symptoms may be alleviated through Ibuprofen or Aleve, elevation, and ice. (Please do not take additional Tylenol if you are taking narcotic pain medication; this already has Tylenol). Your digits will be free to perform normal activities of daily living and it is recommended that you keep your digits moving to prevent swelling after surgery.

You will be expected to keep your temporary splint and bandages clean and dry until your post-operative appointment with your surgeon 7- 10 after surgery. At the time of your post-operative appointment your dressings and post-operative splint will be removed and a cast will be applied. The cast will allow you the use of your digits and will extend to your mid-forearm. You will be in a cast for 4- 6 weeks at which time you will return to the office for follow up. Once your cast has been removed you will be transitioned into a removable splint and occupational therapy will be initiated. Full functional recovery takes approximately 4 to 6 months.

Following your hand surgery, it may be difficult to open your medication bottles. If you prefer, you may request NON child-proof bottles from your pharmacist when dropping off prescriptions. However, please consider the risks if you have small children in your home or if any small children may be accessible to these medications.

## **Reasons to call our office**

Your post-operative splint will allow for fluctuating swelling following surgery. However, if the splint feels too tight you may remove the outer wrap and replace this wrap with an ACE wrap that is less tight. This will be removed at your post-operative visit with your surgeon.

Once you are placed into a cast, you will need to monitor your swelling at home. If your cast begins to feel too tight, be sure to elevate above heart level, ice (above and below the cast), and take anti-inflammatories to control your swelling. Contact the office if you have concerns about your cast or wish to discuss alternative anti-inflammatory medication.

**Please contact the office if you wish to take extended time for recovery or if your job requirements do not allow you to return. You may file FMLA or Short Term Disability paperwork. Contact our office at 913-652-6348 with any questions or concerns.**