

## ARTICLE: Wrist Injuries

This week we are going to talk about 3 unusual wrist injuries all of which can cause considerable problems and the potential complications of each.

The first is a TFCC injury. The TFCC or triangular fibrocartilage is a small meniscus or pad on the ulnar side of the wrist (pinky side) which can become torn during a fall on an outstretched hand and can cause clicking, popping and pain on this side of the wrist. The TFCC is sometimes difficult to detect and often misdiagnosed as a wrist sprain but is rather different than a sprained wrist in that it is not an injury of ligament but is an injury of cartilage. The injury can be spotted with a shear test and is properly diagnosed with an arthrogram.

The second unusual injury to the wrist is the scaphoid fracture. The scaphoid fracture of the wrist is a bone injury which occurs when the scaphoid bone on the radial side of the wrist (thumb side) is broken at it's waist (center) injuring the blood supply to the proximal pole of the scaphoid. This injury results in avascular necrosis or bone death of the scaphoid. Also occurring after a fall on an outstretched hand the scaphoid fracture is often misdiagnosed as a wrist sprain but is more correctly described as a fracture. The hallmark symptom of a scaphoid fracture is it's failure to heal and persistent pain on the radial side of the wrist. The scaphoid fracture is often missed on the initial x-ray as the bone has not had time yet to die off and is often seen on a second film. Additionally, the physician can perform special tests to evaluate the scaphoid fracture.

The third unusual wrist injury which we are going to discuss today is the scapholunate instability. This instability or shift between two bones is a painful click which occurs as a result of many different types of injuries to the wrist and occurs between the scaphoid and the lunate bone. This instability can be extremely problematic and is often misdiagnosed as a sprain. The shift between the two bones causes a painful click on the radial side of the wrist (thumb side) and can be diagnosed with clinical examination using a test called the "Watson's Test" as well as a specific x-ray which shows the gap between the two bones.

As you can see, wrist injuries can be intricate, difficult to diagnose and problematic and all are easily confused with one another. It is always best to get the professional opinion of a wrist and hand expert when diagnosing such injuries. A wrist and hand orthopedist can help diagnose these injuries when they are present and any injury which does not heal in a reasonable period of time should always be evaluated by an orthopedist to rule out some of these more difficult injuries. For more information on wrist and hand injuries and for evaluation of the wrist, do not hesitate to call and schedule a no cost consultation with Melanie Northup, OTR at the Sterling Hand Clinic for direction and assessment.