

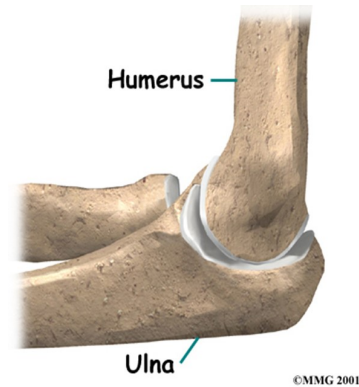
Ulnar Collateral Ligament (UCL) Tears of the Elbow

Definitions— This is a ligament that runs along the inside aspect of the elbow that connects the humerus to the ulna. Many populations that have repetitive, overhead stress to the elbow can have this occur such as pitchers. This is also known as Little Leaguer’s elbow, for children who do not throw properly and the repetitive trauma causes a tear.



Mechanism of Injury:

Often caused by a repetitive outside force on the elbow such as a pitcher or golfer would have.



Physical Therapy

Initial Care: Rest, ice, compression and elevation should be done for a period of time to reduce inflammation and pain. Most UCL injuries can be treated non-surgically but there are a minor population that cannot get proper mechanics back in the elbow and must have a surgery most commonly called Tommy John’s surgery due to the famous baseball player who first had it done.

Rehabilitation:

Either post-injury or post-surgery, the first goal of rehabilitation is to regain full range-of-motion (ROM). It is important that one be able to fully extend and bend one’s arm so daily life is not limited by this injury. To regain this motion, one can begin:

<p>Upper-Extremity Bike (UBE) - The circular motion done with the UBE helps to bend and straighten the elbow.</p>	<p>Pullies - The back and forth movement of the arms helps straighten and bend the elbow as well.</p>	<p>Towel Slides - Using your arms to move up and down and to write out the alphabet works to increase range of motion.</p>
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Once ROM has entered an acceptable range, one will be introduced to more strengthening exercises such as:

<p>Cable Column - When able, one will do different motions as instructed by your PT or Athletic Trainer to increase strength.</p>	<p>Isometric Ball Squeezes - Using a ball in different areas, shown to you by your PT or AT, pushing the ball will contract and strengthen the muscles surrounding the shoulder.</p>	<p>Push Ups with a Plus – To work on postural muscles, do a regular push up and then round up the upper back to strengthen the shoulder joint.</p>
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*Note: One may not progress to more demanding exercises until his or her physical therapist and/or athletic trainer allow it. Progressing oneself without the PT’s or AT’s permission may cause more damage to the joint and delay healing.

Criteria for Return to Activity:

- Have full, pain-free ROM
- Have strength similar to the unaffected arm
- Sports- or work-specific activities must be completed successfully

Works Cited

Prentice, W. E. (2011). *Rehabilitation Techniques for Sports Medicine and Athletic Training* (5th ed.). Chapel Hill, NC: McGraw Hill.

Starkey, C., Brown, S. D., & Ryan, J. (2010). *Examination of orthopedic and athletic injuries* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: F.A. Davis.