Gamekeeper's / Skier's Thumb

You have injured some ligaments in your thumb. This can happen suddenly or over a long period of time. It may be difficult for you to hold things by pinching them between your thumb and finger. The injury may take 6 to 8 weeks to heal. Your injury is a strain injury and not a complete tear so it may be treated with a cast. A complete tear of the ligament can lead to a loss of function of the thumb if not fixed surgically. It got its name from when gamekeepers used to kill game (hunted or trapped animals) by pinning them down around the neck between their thumb and index finger.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply ice to the injury for 15-20 minutes, 3 to 4 times per day for the first 2 days. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin.
- Avoid using your thumb for 2 weeks or as directed if it is not splinted or in a cast.
- If your hand has been casted or splinted while your thumb heals, follow these instructions:
- **Plaster or fiberglass cast:**
  - Do not try to scratch the skin under the cast using a sharp or pointed object.
  - Check the skin around the cast every day. You may put lotion on any red or sore areas.
  - Keep your cast dry. Your cast can be protected during bathing with a plastic bag. Do not put your cast into the water.
  - If your fiberglass cast gets wet, it can be gently dried using a hair dryer. Be careful not burn yourself.
- Plaster splint:
  - Wear the splint as directed or until you are seen for a follow-up examination.
  - Do not get your splint wet. Protect it during bathing with a plastic bag.
  - You may loosen the elastic bandage around the splint if your fingers start to get numb, tingle, get cold, or turn blue.
- Do not put pressure on your cast or splint; this may cause it to break. Do not lean on hard surfaces for 24 hours after application.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- **IMPORTANT:** follow up with your caregiver or keep or call for any appointments with specialists as directed. The failure to follow up could result in chronic pain and / or disability.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your thumb or fingers change color, become painful, or there is numbness or tingling in your thumb or fingers. Your cast or splint may be too tight.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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