

Dislocation

Summary

A dislocation is when the bones of a joint are forced out of their normal position and the joint surfaces are no longer touching. Subluxation is similar, but the joint surfaces still overlap. Treatment depends on whether it is: open or closed, stable or unstable.

Treatment

Avulsion fractures (breaks) are commonly present where a ligament or tendon pulls a fragment of bone from the joint. **X-rays should always be done** to identify these bony injuries as occasionally they need close monitoring, immobilisation or surgery.

- **Open dislocations need surgery** to reduce the risk of infection.
- Closed dislocations are usually treated with a reduction in the emergency department if not done already.
- Unstable dislocations suggest injury to multiple ligaments or tendons. A period of immobilisation in a cast or splint may be necessary while the structures start to heal.
- If joint position can't be maintained then percutaneous wires can be used
- **If a closed reduction fails then an open reduction is necessary.** Repair of structures can be performed at the same time as necessary.
- **Ulnar collateral ligament injuries of the thumb will not heal if interposition of soft tissue (adductor aponeurosis) between the ligament and bone (Stener Lesion) occurs. These need open repair.**
- Long-term instability of a joint requires ligament reconstruction if symptomatic or limiting function.

