

## Wrist Injury Scapholunate Ligament

The scapholunate ligament is a short but very strong ligament. It **tightly binds the scaphoid and lunate**, two of the carpal bones in the wrist. It is one of many ligaments between the carpal bones that result in the **proximal and distal row of carpal bones moving as one**.

### Cause:

A fall on an outstretched hand or forced extension of the wrist is the most common cause of a scapholunate injury. It is **more common in high force injuries** such as sporting accidents.

### Symptoms:

- Pain. This **can be relatively minor** and patients often assume it is just a sprain.
- Reduced movement. Again, this may be similar to a sprain.
- The wrist **can recover and seem normal** due to other supporting ligaments.

### Diagnosis:

- History and examination findings are important in the diagnosis as x-rays are usually normal.
- You should be placed in a plaster slab and referred to a hand surgeon if there is any concern.
- There are special tests of carpal stability, including the Kirk Watson test.
- **MRI is the best investigation** to look at soft tissue injuries, including ligaments.

Treatment:

- **Partial ligament injuries** are most common and are treated nonoperatively in a **cast or splint for 4-8 weeks**.
- **Complete ligament injuries, if diagnosed early, are repaired**, stabilised and immobilised in a cast for 6-12 weeks.
- **Older injuries, with carpal instability, require ligament reconstruction.**
- It is unproven, but we believe **≤20% of complete scapholunate injuries develop osteoarthritis** in the future. This process takes many years and is treated like all types of wrist arthritis, with nonoperative and salvage procedures.

