

TFCC (Triangular Fibrocartilage Complex) Injuries

Diagnosis Explanation:

A **TFCC injury** is a tear or damage to the **triangular fibrocartilage complex (TFCC)**, a **cartilage structure in the wrist** that stabilizes the **ulna (forearm bone)** and **supports wrist motion**. It is commonly caused by **falls onto an outstretched hand (FOOSH)**, **repetitive wrist twisting (sports, manual labor)**, or **degenerative wear**.

Types of TFCC Injuries:

- **Traumatic (Type 1)** - Caused by sudden impact, such as a fall or twisting motion.
- **Degenerative (Type 2)** - Develops over time due to cartilage wear (common in arthritis).

Symptoms:

- **Pain on the ulnar side (pinky side) of the wrist**, especially with twisting motions.
- **Clicking, popping, or grinding sensation** in the wrist.
- **Weak grip strength** and difficulty lifting objects.
- **Swelling and tenderness** on the outer wrist.

Specific Work Modifications:

- **If your job involves typing or writing:** Use an **ergonomic keyboard and wrist rest**, and take **frequent breaks**.
- **If your job requires manual labor:** Avoid **gripping, lifting, or repetitive wrist twisting**. Use **wrist braces** if needed.
- **If your job is desk-based:** Keep the wrist in a **neutral position**, adjust desk height, and avoid **resting directly on the injured wrist**.
- **Avoid:** Forceful wrist movements, repetitive rotation, and prolonged wrist flexion/extension.

Specific Activity Modifications:

- **If you play sports:** Avoid **racket sports, weightlifting, and activities requiring wrist rotation (golf, baseball, tennis, gymnastics)**.
- **If you do yoga or Pilates:** Modify wrist-bearing poses (e.g., plank, downward dog) to reduce joint stress.
- **If you play an instrument, knit, or garden:** Use **larger-handled tools** and modify grip positions.
- **Avoid:** High-impact activities, repetitive wrist twisting, and excessive weight-bearing on the wrist.

Recommended Supplements:

- **Collagen Peptides** - 10g daily for cartilage and ligament support.
- **Vitamin C** - 500mg daily to promote collagen synthesis.
- **Glucosamine & Chondroitin** - 1500mg/1200mg daily for joint lubrication and cartilage health.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids** - 1000mg daily to reduce inflammation.
- **Turmeric (Curcumin)** - 500-1000mg daily for pain relief.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration:

- **Increase Lean Protein** (chicken, fish, tofu, eggs) to support tissue healing.
- **Eat Anti-Inflammatory Foods** (berries, leafy greens, turmeric, nuts) to reduce swelling.
- **Consume Hydrating Foods** (cucumber, watermelon, citrus) to maintain joint lubrication.
- **Limit Processed Foods & Sugars** to prevent inflammation.
- **Hydration:** Drink **8-10 cups of water daily** to support joint and cartilage function.

Home Exercise Prescription (Rehabilitation for TFCC Injury)

Early Phase (0-4 Weeks, Protecting the Wrist & Reducing Pain):

- **Wrist Bracing** - Wear a **wrist brace or splint for 4-6 weeks** as needed to stabilize the joint.
- **RICE Protocol** - Rest, Ice (15-20 min, 3x/day), Compression, Elevation.
- **Gentle Wrist Stretching** - Extend arm, pull wrist back gently, **hold 20 seconds, 3x/day**.

Strengthening Phase (4-8 Weeks, Restoring Mobility & Function):

- **Wrist Ulnar Deviation (Light Resistance)** - Move wrist side to side with a light weight, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Wrist Flexion & Extension (Light Resistance)** - Hold a small weight, curl wrist up and down, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Grip Strengthening (Soft Ball Squeeze)** - Squeeze a soft ball **5 seconds, repeat 10 reps, 2x/day**.

Advanced Phase (8+ Weeks, Preventing Recurrence & Maintaining Function):

- **Forearm Pronation/Supination (Light Resistance Band)** - Rotate forearm palm-up and palm-down, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Wrist Circles** - Slowly rotate wrists in both directions, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Thumb Opposition Drill** - Touch thumb to each fingertip, **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Helpful Books:

1. *The Healthy Wrist Handbook: Exercises & Treatments for Wrist Pain & Injury* - Dr.

Ross Clifford.

2. *Overcoming Wrist & Hand Pain: A Self-Help Guide* - Susan J. Barnhart, PT.

Click here for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.