

## **Skier's Thumb**

Skier's thumb (also referred to as gamekeeper's thumb) may be the most common skiing injury occurring in up to 20% of all reported ski accidents.

The inner collateral ligament of the thumb joint is injured when the skier attempts to break a fall with the outstretched hand while holding onto a ski pole. The pole and its associated wrist strap force the thumb outward away from the adjacent index finger. This results in injury to the inner (ulnar) collateral ligament of the thumb joint. Swelling and tenderness are located in this region. Most skiers note weakness of pinch and grip strength after this injury.

Subsequent evaluation by an orthopaedic hand surgeon includes a physical examination and radiographs. Tears of the thumb ligament are graded I, II, or III in severity. Grade III injuries additionally may require surgery.

To prevent skier's thumb, some recommend that skier's avoid the use of safety straps or grip their ski poles outside the strap. Often the key feature of the injury is that the skier retains the pole in the hand at the moment of impact.