

## What is arthritis at the base of the thumb?

Osteoarthritis (OA) occurs when there is a loss of joint space between two bones. One of the most common joints in the hand to develop OA is at the base of the thumb. Due to the normal mobility of this joint, it is prone to wear and tear, which results in loss of the cartilage or cushions between the joint. Arthritis at the base of the thumb is also known as Carpometacarpal (CMC) arthritis or basal joint arthritis.

## What causes arthritis at the base of the thumb?

The cause of arthritis at the base of the thumb is thought to be the result of a combination of factors including family history, repetitive pinching or twisting of the thumb and general overuse. Thumb arthritis can also occur when there is a history of trauma, fractures or dislocations of the thumb. Thumb arthritis is seen most often in older age.

## What are the symptoms of CMC arthritis?

The symptoms of CMC joint arthritis are pain with pinching, gripping and general thumb use. Using a key, turning a door-knob or opening a jar can be painful with this type of arthritis. Thumb pain may also occur at night or when resting. Individuals with arthritis at the base of the thumb may also notice swelling at the area of pain.

# CMC ARTHRITIS

(Basal joint)

## What is the treatment for arthritis at the base of the thumb?

Treatment for basal joint arthritis can be non-operative or operative. The initial conservative treatment is rest and modification of daily activities. If the symptoms are mild, anti-inflammatory medication may be prescribed or cortisone injection to help decrease the pain. If the symptoms persist and begin to limit hand function, surgery may be recommended.

## What is operative treatment?

Operative treatment is called CMC arthroplasty with suture suspension and will require about a 3 month recovery. A post-op splint for about 2 weeks followed by therapy with a Certified Hand Therapist for a custom splint and exercise program.



## DR. LINCOSKI'S POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: CMC ARTHROPLASTY WITH DEQUERVAIN'S RELEASE

What to expect **DURING** your surgery:

- You will have an IV for General anesthesia vs sedation (twilight) and a nerve block (numbing shot to arm)
- You will leave the surgery center with your lower arm in a half cast

What to expect **AFTER** your CMC arthroplasty surgery:

- You should move fingers that day to keep them moving and prevent fingers getting stiff.
- It is normal to have some pain and swelling in the hand and into the fingers. Be sure to elevate frequently above the heart with ice to help alleviate swelling.
- You will have a half cast on arm for 10-14 days. It will have an ace wrap on it, if this feels too tight after surgery you may loosen the ace wrap on your own.
- A physical therapy appointment is scheduled about 10-14 days after your surgery. The Certified Hand Therapist (CHT) will make you a custom splint, show you range of motion exercises and progress you through your recovery.
- You will not be able to use the thumb for about 6-8 weeks and will use the splint for this time. However, it will be about 3 months until the hand is feeling good
- You will be given pain medication to help alleviate the pain. You should begin taking pain medication before nerve block wears off. You may alternate with ibuprofen if needed.

