

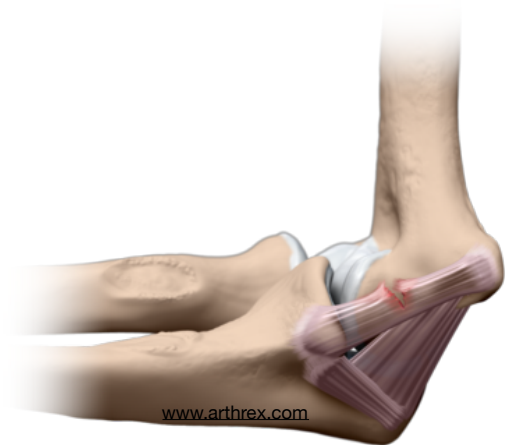
Elbow Instability (aka Elbow Ligament Tear, Elbow Dislocation)

What is elbow instability?

Elbow instability is when one or both of the ligaments that stabilize the elbow are injured. These are the ulnar collateral ligament and the lateral collateral ligament.

What causes elbow instability?

Elbow instability, or ligament tears of the elbow, can be acute or chronic. Acute elbow instability is usually associated with an elbow dislocation or other elbow injury such as throwing a baseball or falling. Chronic elbow instability can be associated with an old elbow injury or progressive elbow symptoms over time.



How is elbow instability diagnosed?

Elbow instability is diagnosed with physical exam, xrays, and MRI. Patients will have elbow guarding or laxity on physical exam. Xray may show joint incongruity and the MRI will show damage to the stabilizing ligaments around the elbow.

How is elbow instability treated?

Elbow Dislocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For an elbow dislocation, these are closed reduced and splinted for 7-10 days. Afterwards, the splint is removed and ROM started. Sometimes physical therapy can help with motion and strength if needed.
Ligament Tear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For ligament tears around the elbow, these are usually splinted for 7-10 days followed by physical therapy to gain strength and range of motion. - If strength, range of motion, or stability are not achieved with therapy, surgical ligament reconstruction with an allograft or an Internal Brace may be needed to stabilize the joint

What is recovery after surgery?

- Weeks 0-2: After surgery, patients are kept in splint dressing until the follow up appointment. You are encouraged to wiggle your fingers and squeeze a full fist as much as possible after surgery to help with pain and swelling.
- Weeks 2-6: At the follow up appointment, you will be transitioned to a removable elbow splint that you can take on and off to shower and for hygiene. You will progress with gentle, limited range of motion of the elbow during this time.
- Weeks 6-10: The splint is discontinued and PT started to work on full motion
- Weeks 10-16: Start gentle strengthening
- Weeks 16+: Ease in to regular activities