

# SOUTHPORT PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTRE

3E/34 High Street, Southport QLD 4215

P: (07) 5591 4333

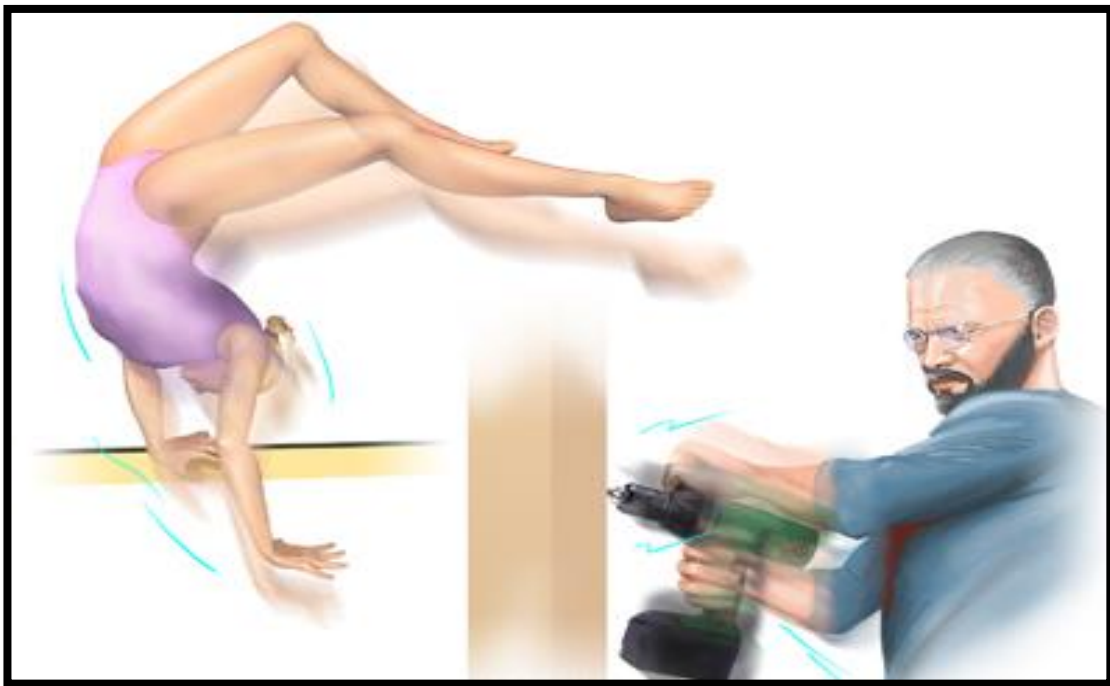
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## Wrist Injuries

### Triangular Fibro-Cartilage Complex – (TFCC)

The Triangular Fibro-Cartilage Complex (TFCC) is located in the wrist and is often a source of wrist pain. The TFCC sits between the ulna and the carpal wrist bones and consists of the triangular fibro-cartilage, ulnar meniscus, wrist ligaments and tendon sheath. The complex provides the wrist with stability, shock absorption and allows the joints to glide smoothly during movement.

Injuries to the TFCC often occur either from acute traumatic injuries such as a fall, or from chronic degenerative changes. Acute traumatic injuries may occur due to compressive loading and movement towards the ulnar (pinkie finger) side of the wrist as well as distraction and movement towards the radial (thumb) side of the wrist. This often occurs in athletes involved in gymnastics, racquet sports and golf as well as people who use power drills. Acute tears can also occur in conjunction with fractures of the wrist and falling onto an outstretched hand.



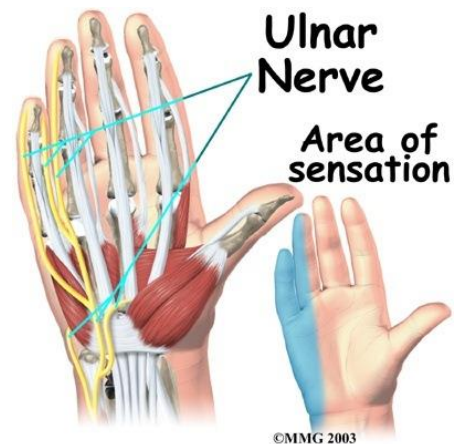
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TFCC tears can also be due to degenerative changes and is often incorrectly attributed to arthritis. It may present, with or without a history of trauma. Degenerative tears occur as a result of decreased tissue quality. These injuries are more commonly seen in sporting and occupational populations which require repetitive wrist movements over an extended length of time. Anatomical variations such as an increased ulnar length may also result in a degenerative tear of the TFCC.



**The signs and symptoms of a TFCC tear vary based on the location and the mechanism of injury. Some common presentations include:**

- Feeling discomfort
- Ulnar sided wrist pain (sharp in acute tears and ache in chronic cases)
- May have some clicking
- Avoiding ulnar and radial deviation (shaking hands)
- Feelings of instability in the ulnar wrist
- Symptoms are activity dependant (worse with activity and improve with rest)

**The physiotherapist can conduct a thorough physical examination to confirm the diagnosis of a TFCC tear or rule out other sources.**

- Imaging may be useful in diagnosing a TFCC tear
- MRI: can be useful in confirming TFCC tears in suspected patients
- Arthroscopy: the gold standard to diagnosing TFCC tears
- X-Ray: may be used to rule out any bony involvement such as fractures or avulsion in traumatic incidents.

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## Physiotherapy Management

Physiotherapy management is indicated if the wrist joint is stable and is usually undertaken before any surgical intervention is considered.

Physiotherapy management may consist of:

- Range of movement exercises to prevent secondary issues such as stiffness and weakness
- Muscle strengthening exercises: gradual loading to restore normal bilateral strength and function
- Electrotherapy: ultrasound may be used to facilitate healing and/or remove inflammation in the area.

