

## PATIENT EDUCATION RESOURCE

# Scapholunate Advanced Collapse (SLAC) Wrist



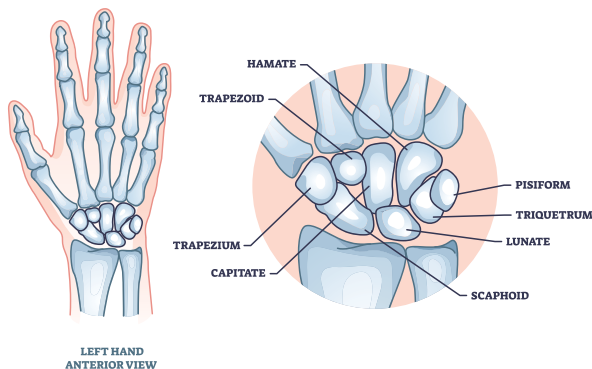
**"Working with a knowledgeable hand therapist can make the difference between success and failure in complex hand surgical cases. The therapist extends the continuum of our care, as well as functioning as coach and trainer for our patients."**

MARYBETH EZAKI, MD, PAST PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR SURGERY OF THE HAND

### What is a SLAC wrist?

Scapholunate advanced collapse (SLAC) is a form of wrist arthritis. The wrist is made of two long bones (radius and ulna) and eight small bones (carpals). Two of the carpal bones are the scaphoid (close to the thumb) and the lunate (near the center of the wrist). SLAC wrist happens when damage to the ligament that connects the scaphoid and lunate (SL ligament) allows the position of the carpal bones to shift out of alignment.

### CARPAL BONES



A SLAC wrist occurs when damage to the ligament that connects the scaphoid and lunate allows the position of the carpal bones to shift out of alignment

### What are the symptoms of SLAC wrist?

A person with a SLAC wrist may notice pain, weakness and stiffness in their wrist. These symptoms may occur with activities that require lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling. It may also be hard to put weight through the palm while pushing up from a chair or doing a pushup.

### What causes a SLAC wrist?

SLAC wrist does not happen right after an injury. It happens over time as the carpal bones shift because of ligament

damage. When the scaphoid and lunate do not line up with the rest of the wrist, the wrist becomes weaker and painful. The SL ligament is most commonly injured during a fall onto the palm. Heavy use of the wrist and hand may also cause SLAC wrist because the stress on the wrist can cause the SL ligament to weaken.



*The scapholunate ligament is most commonly injured during a fall onto the palm*

### What is the treatment for a SLAC wrist?

Each case of SLAC wrist is treated based on many factors including age, health and your daily activities. If the wrist is not too painful and weak, the doctor may suggest seeing a hand therapist – an occupational or physical therapist who specializes in treating the upper extremity. Your doctor may recommend surgery if your wrist is very painful, weak and limiting your ability to perform daily activities like brushing your teeth or making food.

### What can a hand therapist do for me?

Exercises are often used to help the wrist move better and become stronger. A custom orthosis can help with pain by giving your wrist extra support. Your hand therapist can educate you on how to manage your pain and recommend changes to the way you perform some daily activities to reduce stress to your wrist.



*A hand therapist can provide you with a custom orthosis to help with pain and give the wrist extra support*

To locate a hand therapist in your area, visit the  
American Society of Hand Therapists at [www.asht.org](http://www.asht.org) or call 856-380-6856.