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Major League Baseball Players Win More Games, Allow Fewer Walks Following Tommy John Surgery

*Since 1986, 83 percent of patients returned
to successful pitching in the major leagues following treatment for common elbow injury*

NEW ORLEANS—Ulnar collateral ligament (UCLR) reconstruction, otherwise known as “Tommy John Surgery,” is a procedure frequently performed on Major League Baseball (MLB) pitchers with a damaged or torn [ulnar collateral ligament](#), a common elbow injury, typically from overuse.

In the new study, [“Performance and Return-to-Sport After Tommy John Surgery in Major League Baseball Pitchers,”](#) * presented today at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) (AAOS), researchers looked at the rate of return to MLB pitching following UCLR, the level of performance in pitchers returning to MLB, and the difference in overall performance between pitchers who underwent UCLR and demographic-matched controls who did not. Researchers evaluated UCLR pitchers between 1986 and 2012 using a number of performance-based statistics and compared them with matched controls: age, body mass index (BMI), position, handedness and MLB experience.

In the year prior to surgery, the UCLR pitchers were outperformed by controls in terms of the number of innings pitched, games played and winning percentage. However, after undergoing UCLR, pitchers allowed significantly fewer walks and hits per inning pitched (WHIP), won a higher percentage of games, and recorded lower earned run averages (ERA) than prior to their surgeries. The UCLR pitchers also recorded higher winning percentages and lower WHIP and ERA in their post-surgical career than the control group. Overall, 83 percent of UCLR patients were able to return to MLB, and their careers on average lasted an additional 3.9 years.

The authors of the study concluded that there is a high rate of pitchers returning to MLB following UCLR, with a significant improvement in pitching performance.

* “Rate of Return to Pitching after Tommy John Surgery in Major League Baseball Pitchers,” appeared in the December 2013 *American Journal of Sports Medicine*.

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