

# Baseball players enjoy successful long-term results after elbow surgery

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Baseball players undergoing ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) surgery are able to return to the same or higher level of competition for an extended period of time, according to research presented today at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's (AOSSM) Annual Meeting in Chicago, IL.

"Previous studies showed successful return to play after UCL surgery, but we were also able to evaluate each athlete's career [longevity](#) and reason for retirement," commented lead author, Daryl C. Osbahr, MD of MedStar Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore. "These players typically returned to play within a year of surgery and averaged an additional 3.6 years of playing time, a significant amount considering the extensive nature of this surgery in a highly competitive group of [athletes](#). They also typically did not retire from baseball secondary to continued elbow problems."

The study examined 256 patients, including high school, college and professional baseball players, and were contacted an average of 12.6 years after their UCL reconstruction. Approximately 83 percent of these athletes were able to return to the same or higher level of competition, with only 3 percent reporting persistent elbow pain and only 5 percent noting limitation of elbow function during day-to-day activities.

"UCL injuries used to be considered career-ending," Osbahr noted. "Now players are consistently able to return to play at a high level while also enjoying excellent long-term outcomes."

While approximately 243 (95%) of the athletes studied had retired by the minimum 10-year follow-up, 238 (98%) still participated in throwing at a recreational level with most reporting no [elbow pain](#).

The research earned AOSSM's O'Donoghue Sports Injury Research award, given annually to the best overall paper that deals with clinical-based or human in-vivo research.

Provided by American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

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