

# Tommy John Surgery a good solution for MLB pitchers

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New data suggests ulnar collateral (UCL) reconstruction, better known as Tommy John Surgery, allows major league pitchers to return to the mound at high rates, and with a positive impact on some performance parameters. The research, presented at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's (AOSSM) Specialty Day, examined 179 major league pitchers from 1986 to 2012.

"Our research showed 83% of MLB pitchers undergoing this elbow surgery returned to pitching, with most returning after an average of 20.5 months," noted author Dr. Anil K. Gupta from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. "Not only that, but more than 97% of the pitchers studied, at least returned to the minor leagues – impressive results for a major surgical [reconstruction](#) that requires an extensive recovery period."

The study also demonstrated some positive performance indicators, including a drop in average earned run average (ERA) from 5.7 pre-surgery to 4.2 post-, as well as a decline in pitching losses from 4.4 per year to 3.1.

"We do caution looking too much into the improved stats for pitchers," commented Gupta. "We did still find pitchers had fewer innings pitched and total wins after surgery, and we do not want to suggest Tommy John surgery is an option for improved performance. More needs to be done to learn about this surgery at all levels of baseball, including the high school and collegiate level, as well as how it changes a pitcher's role and style."

The team's research also showed MLB pitchers returning averaged a 3.9 year career length following surgery.

Provided by American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

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