

MENISCUS TEAR OF THE KNEE

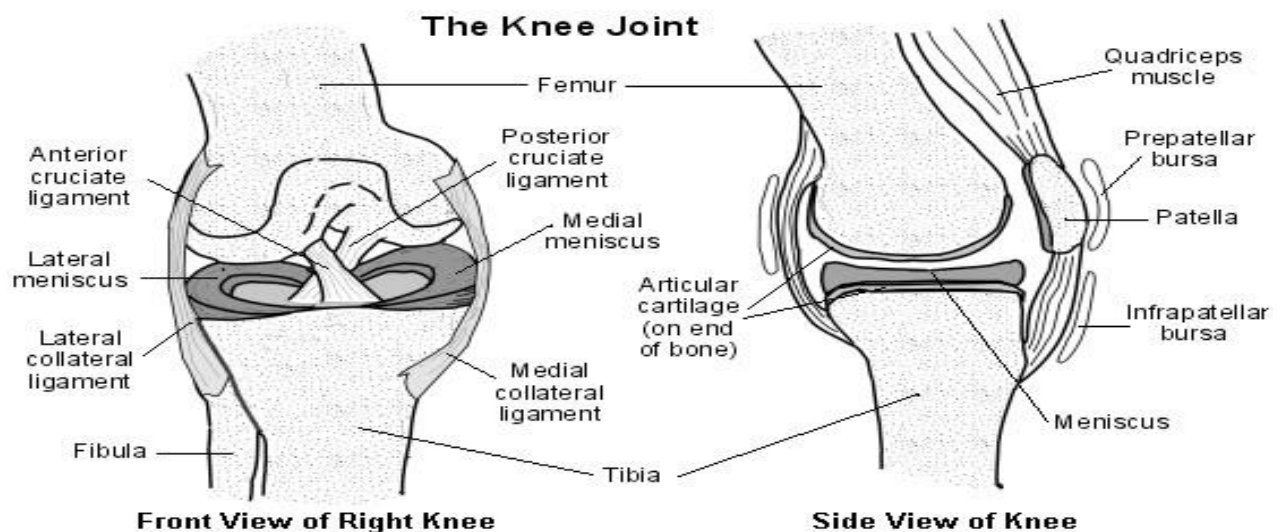
What is a meniscus?

The meniscus consists of two wedge-shaped pieces of fibro-cartilage that act as "shock absorbers" between your thigh bone (femur) and shin bone (tibia). They are tough and rubbery to help cushion the joint and keep it stable. One meniscus is called the medial meniscus (inner side of your knee) and the other is called the lateral meniscus (outside of your knee).

How does the meniscus tear?

Sudden meniscus tears often happen during a twisting injury or direct blow to the knee (sports injury). As people age our cartilage weakens and wears thin over time. These thinner tissues are more prone to tears called degenerative meniscus tears. If the meniscus has naturally weakened even an awkward twist when getting up from a chair may be enough to cause a tear.

The meniscus can tear in different ways and are noted by how they look, as well as where the tear occurs in the meniscus. Types of tears include bucket handle, flap and radial tears. Each type requires different surgical consideration which Dr. Comfort will discuss with you. A simple analogy of a meniscal tear is that the tear is like a "hangnail" of your meniscal tissue. Since the "hangnail" piece of tissue doesn't heal well, it can move around in your knee and get caught. This can cause pain, swelling, locking, or catching. Dr. Comfort may recommend an arthroscopic (scope) procedure to "clip" or surgically trim away the torn part of meniscus leaving the remaining normal meniscus intact.



What does surgery involve?

Knee arthroscopy is one of the most commonly performed surgical procedures. During an arthroscopy, a miniature camera is inserted through three small incisions (portals) on your knee. This provides a clear view of the inside of the knee and allows Dr. Comfort to insert miniature surgical instruments through those portals to trim or repair the tear. You will be asleep for the procedure which normally takes about 30-45 minutes to complete.



Partial meniscectomy. In this procedure, the damaged meniscus tissue is trimmed away.

Meniscus repair. Some meniscus tears can be repaired by suturing (stitching) the torn pieces together. Whether a tear can be successfully treated with repair depends upon the type of tear, as well as the overall condition of the injured meniscus. The meniscus must heal back together so recovery time for a repair is much longer than from a partial meniscectomy. This also will require you to refrain from strenuous activities/sports and wear a protective knee brace for up to three months.

Dr. Comfort will discuss options with you and suggest the best surgical procedure for your type of meniscal tear based on your physical exam and radiographic information (X-rays/MRI).

What can I expect after surgery?

Recovery from surgery usually takes between four to six weeks.

- **Walking:** You may be up and around using pain as a guide. You can put light pressure on the operated foot. As your pain improves, you may increase the amount of pressure on your leg until you are bearing full weight.
- **Crutch or cane use:** Use as needed for balance and support. Discontinue using an assistive device when able.
- **Driving:** You may drive anytime if you do not use a clutch and had surgery on your left leg. If it was your right leg, wait until you have adequate control over the leg to operate the controls of the vehicle. You should be putting full pressure on the leg with minimal pain and off narcotic pain medications.
- **School/Work:** You can return to school/work anytime you feel comfortable. You may have to take a week or two off until you are comfortable returning to school/work. You will need to avoid excessive walking and strenuous activities. You should elevate your leg as needed.

PHYSICAL THERAPY: Outpatient physical therapy is not necessary immediately after surgery unless directed by Dr. Comfort. This will be reassessed and ordered if necessary at your post-operative appointment.