



ACL INJURY

PATIENT'S INFORMATION
BOOKLET



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What is ACL Injury?

An ACL injury is a tear or sprain of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL)- one of the strong bands of tissue that help connect your thigh bone (femur) to your shinbone (tibia). ACL injuries most commonly occur during sports that involve sudden stops or changes in direction, jumping and landing such as basketball and football.

Many people hear a pop or feel a "popping" sensation in the knee when an ACL injury occurs. Your knee may swell, feel unstable and become too painful to bear weight.



What are the symptoms ACL injury?

A loud pop or a "popping" sensation in the knee with severe pain and inability to continue activity. You may also develop rapid swelling of the knee with partial or complete loss of range of motion due to pain. A feeling of instability or "giving way" of the knee upon weight bearing is typical of ACL injury.

What are the risk factors for ACL injury?

There are a number of factors that increase your risk of an ACL injury, including:



Being female — possibly due to differences in anatomy, muscle strength and hormonal influences.

Participating in certain sports, such as football, basketball and gymnastics. Poor conditioning of muscles and faulty movement patterns, such as moving the knees inward during a squat. Wearing footwear that doesn't fit properly and using poorly maintained sports equipment are all associated with greater chances of injury.

ACL injuries often happen during sports and fitness activities that put stress on the knee: Suddenly slowing down and changing direction, pivoting with your foot firmly planted, Landing awkwardly from a jump, stopping suddenly or receiving a direct blow to the knee or having a collision.

When the ligament is damaged, there is usually a partial or complete tear of the tissue. A mild injury may stretch the ligament but leave it intact.

What are the complications after sustaining an ACL injury?

People who experience an ACL injury have a higher risk of developing osteoarthritis in the knee. Arthritis may occur even if you have surgery to reconstruct the ligament.

Multiple factors likely influence the risk of arthritis, such as the severity of the original injury, the presence of related injuries in the knee joint or the level of activity after treatment.



When do i see a doctor?

Seek immediate care if any injury to your knee causes signs or symptoms of an ACL injury. The knee joint is a complex structure of bones, ligaments, tendons and other tissues that work together. It is important to get a prompt and accurate diagnosis to determine the severity of the injury and get proper treatment.

Do I need any tests?

The diagnosis of an ACL injury is usually made by a doctor's examination. You may also need an X-ray and MRI scan of your knee joint.

What is the treatment of ACL injury?

Initial treatment for an ACL injury focuses on decreasing pain and swelling in the knee. Rest, limb elevation and mild pain medications can help decrease these symptoms.

Most patients receive physical therapy after having an ACL injury. Therapists treat swelling and pain with the use of ice. Exercises are used to help you regain normal movement of joints and muscles. Range-of-motion exercises are started right away with the goal of helping you swiftly regain full movement in your knee. Exercises are also given to improve the strength of the hamstring and quadriceps muscles.



When should I get Surgery?

If the symptoms of instability are not controlled by rehabilitation program, then surgery may be suggested. The main goal of surgery is to keep the tibia from moving too far forward under the femur bone and to get the knee functioning normally again.

Even when surgery is needed, most surgeons will have their patients attend physical therapy before the surgery. This practice restores motion of the knee and also reduces the chances of scarring inside the joint.

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