

KNEE INJURIES (IV)

MENISCUS INJURY

By Dr. Boyd Williams

The meniscus of the knee is a wedge-shaped cartilage lying between and separating the bones of the leg. One meniscus lies on the outside of the knee joint – the lateral meniscus, and one lies on the inside of the knee – the medial meniscus.

The cartilages of the knee are designed for purposes of bearing weight. They also are very important for absorbing shock and vibration in the knee with walking and running. The meniscus also helps to guide the knee during motion providing for better stability.

Injury to the meniscus generally is caused from a twisting impact injury to the knee. This type of injury may also result in a tear of one or more ligaments of the knee as well. Signs and symptoms will include pain in the knee after impact, made worse by movement. Swelling may be present and the athlete will most certainly feel sharp pain at the site of the cartilage tear.

Small, less severe tears of the meniscus might only be felt when squatting or when the legs touch at the knee, as when lying down in bed. More severe tears limit motion and can cause locking or catching of the knee.

Surgical and non-surgical treatment for meniscus tears is aimed at reducing pain so the athlete may become active again as well as producing the best possible long-term results preventing later arthritic changes. Consulting a sports-oriented physician will help the athlete determine the best approach for his injury.

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