



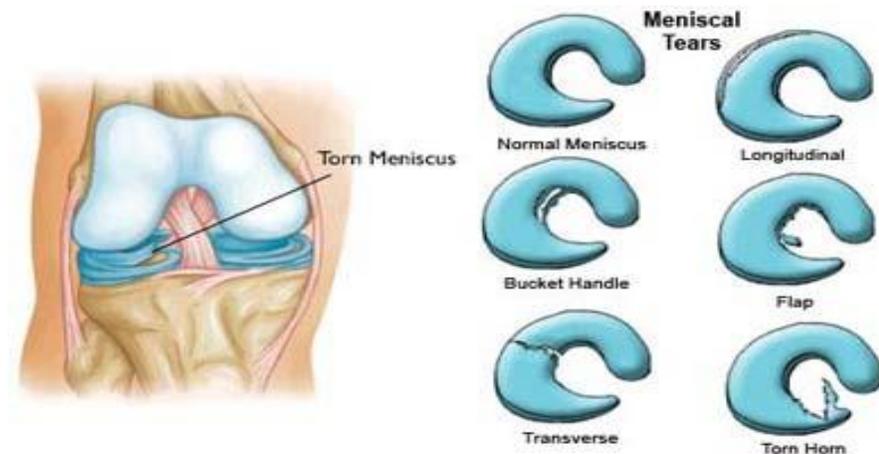
# BAY AREA ORTHOPEDIC

## SURGERY & SPORTS MEDICINE

### **MENISCUS INJURIES TO THE KNEE**

#### When Meniscus Surgery is Recommended

Meniscal tears are among the most common knee injuries. Athletes, particularly those who play contact sports, are at risk for meniscal tears. However, anyone at any age can tear a meniscus. When people talk about torn cartilage in the knee, they are usually referring to a torn meniscus. If your symptoms persist with nonsurgical treatment, your doctor may suggest arthroscopic surgery.



#### Causes and Symptoms

Sudden meniscal tears often happen during sports. Players may squat and twist the knee, causing a tear. Direct contact, like a tackle, is sometimes involved.

Older people are more likely to have degenerative meniscal tears. Cartilage weakens and wears thin over time. Aged, worn tissue is more prone to tears. Just an awkward twist when getting up from a chair may be enough to cause a tear, if the menisci have weakened with age.

You might feel a "pop" when you tear a meniscus. Most people can still walk on their injured knee.

Many athletes keep playing with a tear. Over 2 to 3 days, your knee will gradually become more stiff and swollen.

The most common symptoms of meniscal tear are:

- Pain
- Stiffness and swelling
- Catching or locking of your knee
- The sensation of your knee "giving way"
- You are not able to move your knee through its full range of motion

Without treatment, a piece of meniscus may come loose and drift into the joint. This can cause your knee to slip, pop, or lock.

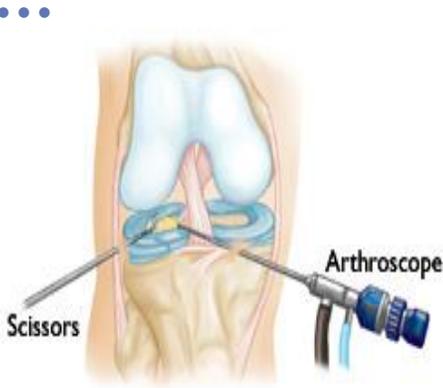
*ORTHOPEDIC NEWSLETTER  
FALL 2014*

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### Physical Examination and Patient History

After discussing your symptoms and medical history, your doctor will examine your knee. He or she will check for tenderness along the joint line where the meniscus sits. This often signals a tear.

One of the main tests for meniscal tears is the McMurray test. Your doctor will bend your knee, then straighten and rotate it. This puts tension on a torn meniscus. If you have a meniscal tear, this movement will cause a clicking sound. Your knee will click each time your doctor does the test.

### Imaging Tests

Because other knee problems cause similar symptoms, your doctor may order imaging tests to help confirm the diagnosis.

**X-rays.** Although x-rays do not show meniscal tears, they may show other causes of knee pain, such as osteoarthritis.

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).** This study can create better images of the soft tissues of your knee joint, like a meniscus.

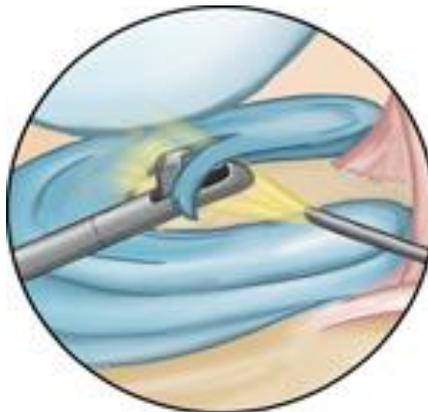
### Nonsurgical Treatment

If your tear is small and on the outer edge of the meniscus, it may not require surgical repair. As long as your symptoms do not persist and your knee is stable, nonsurgical treatment may be all you need.

**RICE.** The RICE protocol is effective for most sports-related injuries. RICE stands for Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation.

- **Rest.** Take a break from the activity that caused the injury. Your doctor may recommend that you use crutches to avoid putting weight on your leg.
- **Ice.** Use cold packs for 20 minutes at a time, several times a day. Do not apply ice directly to the skin.
- **Compression.** To prevent additional swelling and blood loss, wear an elastic compression bandage.
- **Elevation.** To reduce swelling, recline when you rest, and put your leg up higher than your heart.

**Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines.** Drugs like aspirin and ibuprofen reduce pain and swelling.



### Surgical Treatment

If your symptoms persist with nonsurgical treatment, your doctor may suggest arthroscopic surgery.

**Procedure.** Knee arthroscopy is one of the most commonly performed surgical procedures. In it, a miniature camera is inserted through a small incision. This provides a clear view of the inside of the knee. Your orthopaedic surgeon inserts miniature surgical instruments through other small incisions to trim or repair the tear.

- **Meniscectomy.** In this procedure, the damaged meniscal tissue is trimmed away.
- **Meniscus repair.** Some meniscal 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. Because the meniscus must heal back together, recovery time for a repair is much longer than from a meniscectomy.

### Rehabilitation

After surgery, you will need to use crutches for about a week to keep weight off of your knee.

- Once the initial healing is complete, your doctor will prescribe physical therapy. Regular exercise to restore your knee mobility and strength is necessary. You will start with exercises to improve your range of motion. Strengthening exercises will gradually be added to your rehabilitation plan.
- A meniscectomy requires approximately 3 to 4 weeks to recover and return to work.

*To learn more about Meniscus Injuries, please visit our website at [www.baosurgery.com](http://www.baosurgery.com)*

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