



Orthopedic Associates OF PORT HURON

Meniscus Injuries to the Knee

What is a Meniscus?

A meniscus is a C-shaped piece of cartilage located on either side of the knee joint. The meniscus acts as a gasket between the top and the bottom of the knee joint. This piece of cartilage functions by creating a more even distribution of force throughout the knee joint, as well as providing a more congruent connection between the two bones of the joint.

The meniscus is a commonly injured structure in the knee. The injury can occur in any age group. In younger people, the meniscus is fairly tough and rubbery, and tears usually occur as a result of a forceful twisting injury. In older people, the meniscus grows weaker with age, and meniscal tears can occur as a result of fairly minor injuries, even from merely squatting.

Symptoms

- Pain along the joint liken or more generalized to the entire knee
- If the tear is large enough, locking may be experienced
- Long-term effects of a torn meniscus may include: wear and tear on the joint surface leading to degeneration, possible swelling and stiffness in the knee joint

Treatment

- Non-Surgical
 - Rest
 - Ice
 - Physical Therapy including range of motion and strengthening exercises, as well as modalities for pain and inflammation control
- Surgical
 - If the knee is locked and cannot be straightened, surgery may be recommended as soon as reasonably possible to remove the torn

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940 River Centre Drive, Port Huron, Michigan 48061-5031
(810)985-4900 or 1-888-OAPH-911
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- portion that is caught in the knee joint. Because of poor blood supply, once a meniscus is torn, it is not likely to heal on its own.
- If symptoms continue, surgery will be required to either remove the torn portion of the meniscus or to repair the tear.

Arthroscopic Surgery

Most surgery today is performed utilizing the arthroscope. Small incisions are made in the knee to allow the insertion of a small TV camera into the joint. Through another small incision, special instruments are used to remove the torn portion of meniscus while the arthroscope is used to see what is happening. In some cases, the meniscus tear can be repaired. The arthroscope is used to view the torn meniscus. Sutures are then placed on the torn meniscus until the tear is repaired.

An arthroscopy is performed on an outpatient basis. Unless there are complications, the patient will go home the same day as surgery.

Home instructions for the 1st few days following the surgery are given to the patient at the time of discharge. These include:

- Elevate the knee above the level of the heart as much as possible
- Ice the knee for 15 minutes every two hours that you are awake
- Remove the dressing after 48 hours following surgery
- Perform the simple exercises given to you from the hospital to maintain range of motion and strength
- Place as much weight through the knee as tolerated as long as there is no significant increase in swelling and/or pain. Utilize crutches as necessary to maintain a normal gait pattern.

Rehabilitation will begin three days following surgery and will consist of range of motion and strengthening, balance, and coordination exercises as well as modalities for pain and inflammation control. Sutures, if any, will be removed 10 – 14 days after surgery during the postoperative visit with the surgeon.

If you have any questions regarding this information, contact Orthopedic Associates at (810)985-4900.

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