

Meniscal tear of the knee

Advice

Meniscal tears of the knee are a very common condition of the knee. These can occur through trauma or as a result of degenerative changes in the knee. They are frequently found throughout the general population and their presence on a scan is not thought to correlate to who will get symptoms from their knee.

Although normal this can be a painful and limiting condition, however most will improve and resolve without surgical treatment. Treatment of a meniscal tear can include pain killers, ice, rest, physiotherapy and exercise. Surgical treatment is only advised if these have failed or if the tear is resulting in significant instability of the knee.

What can I do to help?

Rest: It is usually best to try to carry out your normal activities in small amounts, however you mustn't overdo it. You need to take things slowly, pace your activities and avoid activities that make your pain worse.

Ice: Applying an ice pack to your knee may be helpful for reducing pain and swelling. A packet of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel works well as an ice pack. Leave the peas in place for no more than 20 minutes at a time. This can be repeated several times a day. Combine this with elevating your knee, ideally above the level of your heart, for maximum effect.

Pain relief: Simple painkillers (like paracetamol) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAIDS, (like ibuprofen) are available over the counter and can be very effective but don't use them for more than 2 weeks without seeking medical advice. You should carefully read the Patient Information Leaflet that is provided with this medication.

It is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief if you are currently:

- taking any form of medication
- have any other pre-existing medical conditions
- pregnant

Exercise: It is important to keep exercising your knee as much as possible. Exercise will maintain the strength of the muscles around your knee and keep it moving freely.

Exercises to try:

Please try each one 10-15 times, 2-3 times a day. Some discomfort is normal as you may be moving muscles which are tight or stiff, however it is unhelpful if this pain continues for more than 30 minutes following your exercises. If this is the case, please reduce the distance you move or the duration of the hold. If your pain continues to worsen, please stop the exercises.

1. Seated Knee Extension



Sit in a chair or on the edge of the bed.

Straighten your leg out in front of you so that your toes are pointing up to the ceiling. Slowly bring your leg back down.

If just the weight of your leg is too easy, you can add weight around your ankle with ankle weights or a shopping bag filled with cans of beans tied around your ankle.

2. Wall Squat



Stand with your back against the wall and your feet away from the wall, hip width apart.

Slowly bend your knees while sliding down the wall as in the picture above, keep your back pressed into the wall.

Return to start position. Make sure your knees do not move in towards each other; your knees should be moving straight over your toes.

3. Step Up



Standing at your bottom step, holding on to the handrail

Step onto the bottom step with one leg and push up with the opposite leg

Step back down and repeat