



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Sports Medicine: Meniscus Tear

The meniscus is a C-shaped structure in the knee that acts as a shock absorber between the thigh bone (femur) and the shin bone (tibia). Each knee has two menisci, an inner (medial) and outer (lateral) meniscus. The meniscus is rubbery tissue that loses its elasticity (bounciness) with age. The meniscus can tear due to a blow to the knee, twisting, pivoting, kneeling, squatting or fast change in running direction.

Signs and symptoms

- pain, especially with standing and squatting
- tenderness along the joint line of the knee (where the femur and tibia connect)
- swelling, usually starting within 24 hours after an injury
- locking or catching
- not able to straighten the knee completely
- giving way or buckling of the knee

Increased risk

- contact sports (like football, baseball or volleyball)
- sports requiring a sudden change in direction
- poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility)
- having an abnormally shaped meniscus (discoid meniscus)

Treatment

- Medication

- Anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®) may be recommended by your health care provider. Take these as directed by your health care provider.
- Use of cold and heat
 - Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours and after any activity that makes symptoms worse. Use ice packs or an ice massage.
 - Heat may be used before stretching and strengthening as recommended by a health care provider, physical therapist or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or warm soak.
- Crutches
 - Crutches may be needed if surgery is required or until you can walk without a limp.
- Surgery
 - Surgery is usually advised in children. Most athletes can return to play in 2 to 4 months.
- Physical Therapy
 - Physical therapy with range-of-motion, stretching and strengthening exercises may be done in some cases for smaller tears.

How to prevent

- perform correct warm up and stretching before practice or competition
- maintain suitable conditioning, leg strength, flexibility and endurance
- wear proper protective equipment and make sure it fits correctly, including footwear

When to call the health care provider

Call your health care provider or the **Sports Medicine team** at **614-355-6000** if:

- symptoms get worse or do not improve in 2 weeks despite treatment
- new symptoms develop

**To schedule an appointment with Sports Medicine, visit
NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling or scan
this code with your camera phone.**

