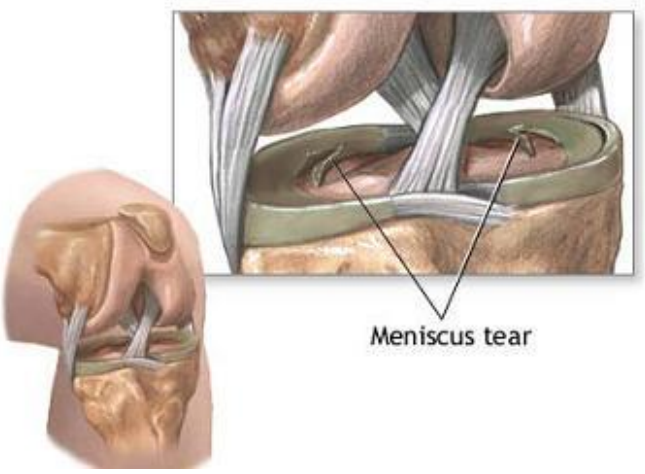
Meniscal Tear

Metro Physio
part of the Metro Health & Wellbeing Group



What is a Meniscal Tear? – This a tear of one or both rubbery discs within the knee called the menisci that provide cushioning and stability to the knee joint.

What Causes it to tear? - it is usually injured when the knee is twisted too quickly with the knee bent and foot fixed on the floor. It can also tear if lifting something very heavy and is more easily torn as you get older. In severe cases, it may be part of a complex injury including damage to the anterior cruciate and medial ligaments.

What are the Symptoms? – With minor tears, you may have slight pain and swelling that resolves within a few weeks. With moderate tears, the pain will be more significant and you are likely to develop swelling that worsens over a few days. This will cause stiffness and reduced mobility of the knee. You may feel sharp pains if twisting or squatting. The symptoms may ease within a few weeks but may recur if putting the knee under greater stress. In severe tears, the above symptoms will be more severe but the meniscus may move causing the knee to lock or give way which requires surgical repair.

What will treatment consist of?

Massage - encompassing a variety of techniques with sufficient pressure through the superficial tissue to reach the deep lying structures. It is used to increase blood flow, decrease swelling, reduce muscle spasm and promote normal tissue repair.

Deep friction - an aggressive massage technique applied across the tissue as deeply as possible to break down scar tissue, restore normal movement and prepare the structure for mobilisation or manipulation. This technique is initially painful but then causes a numbing effect.

Mobilisation - a manual technique where the joint and soft tissues are gently moved by the therapist to restore normal range, lubricate joint surfaces and relieve pain.

Ultrasonic Therapy - transmits sound waves through the tissues stimulating the body's chemical reactions and therefore healing process, just as shaking a test tube in the laboratory speeds up a chemical reaction. It reduces tissue spasm, accelerates healing and results in pain relief.

Interferential Therapy - introduces a small electrical current into the tissues and can be used at varying frequencies for differing treatment effects. E.g. pain relief, muscle or nerve stimulation, promoting blood flow and reducing inflammation.

Other treatments that could be used - Acupuncture - an oriental technique of introducing needles into the skin to increase or decrease energy flow to promote pain relief and healing.

Injection Therapy - a specialist procedure which needs the consent of your G.P. A non-harmful steroid and local anaesthetic are injected directly into the injured structure. It has a dramatic effect on removing inflammation and promoting healing.

Taping/Strapping - may be used if thought necessary to restrict abnormal movement and prevent further damage.

What can you do to help your condition?

Active Rest – keep active but avoid activities that aggravate your condition i.e. any activity that may put a twisting strain on the knee.

Apply an ice pack - for a maximum of 20 minutes. A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp cloth works well because it moulds to the shape of the tissues. Ensure that you do not apply ice directly to the skin as this can cause an ice burn.

Exercise programme – This is the most important part of the rehabilitation, your therapist will instruct you as to which exercises to begin with, when to add the others, as well as how to progress the exercises.

Medication - Ask your GP or Pharmacist for advice on the best medication for your condition.

Podiatry - an analysis of the foot mechanics and structure during walking or running and correction as appropriate.

What if physiotherapy does not help or resolve my condition? – If a short course of physiotherapy does not significantly improve the condition we will refer you on for further investigation.

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