KNEE INJURIES



Whether you play sport socially or professionally, a knee injury can put you out of action. Physiotherapists provide expert advice and treatment to speed up recovery and get you active again following knee injury surgery.

TYPES OF KNEE INJURIES

Acute Injuries: Result from a sudden trauma, such as an awkward fall, collision or twist of the knee joint. **Overuse Injuries:** Result from continuous activity or overload, such as running, jumping, cycling, weight training or bushwalking. These start gradually and usually relate to a range of factors such as structural or biomechanical problems, training methods, footwear, technique or running style.

ACUTE INJURIES

The ligaments and menisci (cartilage) of the knee may be injured.

Ligament sprain (or tear): Ligaments stabilize or strengthen joints. Over-stretching can cause tears to the ligament fibres, resulting in pain, swelling, loss of movement and giving way (instability).

Cartilage (Meniscal) tears: The knee cartilage (or Menisci) also provides stability to the knee joint. They are mostly torn during weight-bearing activities that involve twisting and turning. A torn cartilage (or meniscus) results in pain, swelling and locking or catching of the joint.

Management tips: Many injuries may be successfully treated without surgery by physiotherapy treatment and supervised rehabilitation. If damage is severe, surgery may be required. Physiotherapists work closely with medical physicians and orthopedic surgeons to assist recovery and rehabilitation.

OVERUSE INJURIES

These are much more common than acute injuries, and usually affect the patello-femoral joint or patella tendon. If left untreated they often get progressively worse. Early diagnosis and treatment may result in a quicker recovery, and less pain.

Patello-Femoral Syndrome: Patello-Femoral Syndrome (or kneecap) pain affects approximately 20% of the population and is associated with activities such as bending or stair climbing.

Patellar Tendinopathy: The patella tendon joins the thigh muscle to the leg bone. Injury to this tendon may be known as "jumper's knee" because it commonly occurs with repeated jumping and landing activities (basketball, volleyball etc)

Management Tips: Physiotherapy treatment is essential to reduce the pain and disability associated with overuse knee injuries. In addition, Physiotherapists are well trained to address potential aggravation factors that may have contributed to the development of the overuse injury.

CAN KNEE INJURIES BE PREVENTED?

You may reduce the chance and severity of knee injuries:

- Warm-Up and warm-down before and after exercise
- Build up your exercise program by gradually increasing the frequency, duration and intensity, but don't work through pain
- Maintain good general fitness and lower body strength and flexibility (especially calf, quadriceps and hamstring)
- Practice standing on one leg to improve your balance and leg muscle strength
- Skiers get a qualifies ski technician to check your binding settings (bindings must be set to right and skill level)

WHEN TO RETURN TO WORK/SPORTS

Your Physiotherapist will discuss the injury with you and estimate the time it will take to recover. The time to full recovery varies from a few weeks to a few months depending on the severity of ligament damage. Remember that the pain and swelling subside much faster than the time it takes for the ligament and muscles to regain normal strength. Returning to work or sport too early can delay healing and prolong recovery.

Your Physiotherapist can teach you how to do special ankle taping or fit you with an ankle brace so that you can return to activity earlier, while protecting the ankle from further damage.

Your Physiotherapist can help you plan ways to do alternative training so that you maintain fitness and muscle strength while your ankle is healing.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A SPAIN

As soon as possible, and for 72 hours after injury use the RICE method:

RESTTake it easy and only move within your limit of pain. **ICE**As soon as possible, and for 20 minutes every two hours,

apply ice or a frozen gel pack wrapping in a damp towel. This helps control bleeding and pain and

reduces secondary tissue damage.

COMPRESSION Firmly bandage the entire ankle and lower shin. This

helps to control swelling.

ELEVATE As much as possible, elevate your ankle higher than the

level of your heart to reduce swelling.



HOW PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN HELP

Your Physiotherapist will examine your knee to determine the type, extent and causes of your injury, and can order an X-Ray or refer you to a doctor if needed. Early treatment will reduce pain or swelling.

Special techniques call mobilisation may help to increase the movement of your knee joint (if required), improving your recovery. Your Physiotherapist will teach you exercise to improve strength of the knee and other lower left muscles to enhance your recovery and help prevent further injuries.

REHABILITATE

Recovery can start very early after an injury. Physiotherapy rehabilitation techniques will help reduce the time that you knee is painful and movement is restricted so that you can get back to work and sport more quickly. Rehabilitation also facilitates a good quality ligament repair and the return to normal muscle and nerve function.

Avoid and of the HARM factors in the first 48 hours to prevent increased swelling and help your recovery. These HARM factors are:

HEAT ALCOHOL RUNNING MASSAGE

GENERAL

Many Physiotherapists in private practice are listed in the Yellow Pages. Physiotherapists also work in public hospitals and community health centres. Check to see if a Physiotherapist is a member of the APA. Members of the APA are bound by a professional Code of Ethics and have access to extensive and continuing postgraduate education programs.

HEALTH REBATES

You may consult a Physiotherapist either directly or by referral from your medical Practitioner. Most private health insurance funds offer rebates for physiotherapy treatment.