

Meniscus Repair: Before Your Surgery

Meniscus tears are often caused by twisting or turning the knee, especially when the foot is planted while the knee is bent.

A meniscus is a rubbery, C-shaped piece of cartilage inside your knee.

It acts like a cushion between your thighbone and shinbone.

And it helps keep your knee stable.

You have two in each knee, one on the inner side and one on the outer side.

If you tear your meniscus, your knee may be painful and swollen.

And it may catch, lock, or give out on you.

So you may decide to have surgery to fix it.

Sometimes meniscus tears can be sewn back together.

In other cases, the torn cartilage may be trimmed to remove the damaged area.

Meniscus surgery is usually done through a few small cuts, or incisions, around the knee.

The doctor puts a thin tool called an arthroscope into one of the incisions.

The arthroscope has a camera that sends pictures to a monitor.

This lets the doctor see inside the knee without making a large cut.

After examining your injury, the doctor will put small tools into the incisions to either trim your meniscus or sew it back together.

Then the incisions are closed with stitches, tape, or glue and covered with a bandage.

The whole surgery takes about an hour.

Your leg will be moved a lot during surgery.

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So afterward, your thigh and calf— as well as your knee—may be sore.

Your doctor will give you instructions about using ice and over-the-counter pain medicine to help with any soreness.

If you are given a prescription pain medicine, follow the instructions carefully.

You'll probably be able to go home after about an hour in the recovery room.

You may have a brace on your knee.

And you may be told not to put any weight on your leg at first.

Your doctor will tell you if you need to use crutches.

You may need rehab after surgery.

That usually takes a few weeks, but it may take several months.

Doing your rehab exercises as instructed is the key to helping your leg get stronger— and to helping your knee become flexible and stable again.