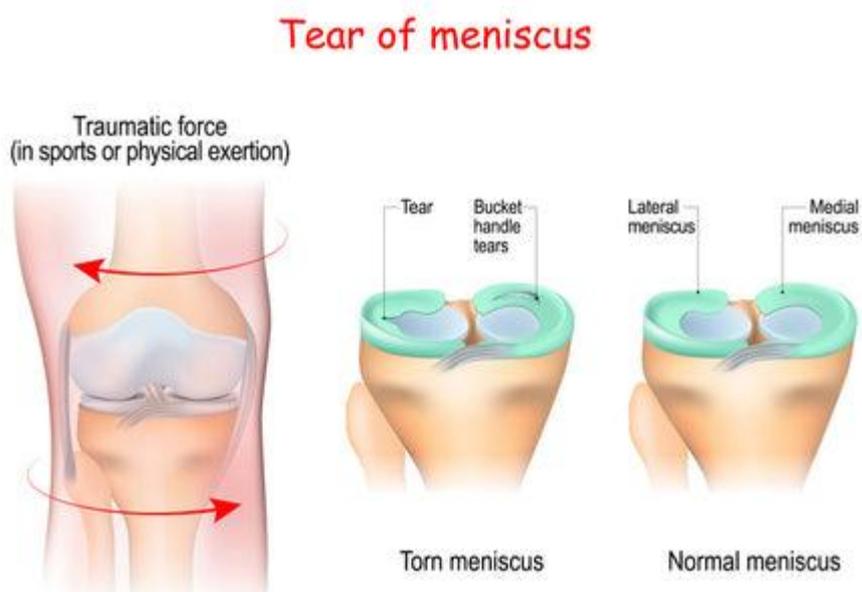


## Meniscus Tear (Knee Cartilage Damage)



### What is the meniscus?

The menisci are two C-shaped pieces of cartilage inside each knee joint. They act as shock absorbers between the thigh bone (femur) and shin bone (tibia), helping to distribute load and improve knee stability.

### What is a meniscus tear?

A meniscus tear occurs when this cartilage is damaged. Tears can happen suddenly due to a twisting injury or gradually due to wear and tear over time. Degenerative tears are common as we get older and may occur without a clear injury.

### Common causes

- Twisting or pivoting on a bent knee

- Sports involving sudden changes of direction
- Squatting or kneeling
- Age-related wear and tear (degenerative changes)
- Previous knee injury

### **Symptoms you may experience**

- Pain along the inside or outside of the knee
- Swelling or stiffness
- Catching, clicking or locking sensations
- Pain when squatting, kneeling or twisting
- Feeling that the knee may give way
- Reduced movement

### **How is it diagnosed?**

A healthcare professional such as a GP or physiotherapist will usually diagnose a meniscus tear based on:

- Your symptoms and injury history
- Physical examination of the knee
- MRI scan only if symptoms are severe, persistent or surgery is being considered

Many meniscus tears can be managed without surgery.

### **Treatment and self-management**

#### **1. Conservative (non-surgical) treatment**

This is the first-line treatment for most people:

- Activity modification to avoid painful movements
- Structured physiotherapy exercises to improve strength and control
- Pain relief as advised by your GP
- Ice may help with swelling (10–15 minutes, wrapped in a cloth)

Exercise-based rehabilitation is often as effective as surgery for many degenerative tears.

#### **2. Surgery (selected cases)**

Surgery may be considered if:

- The knee repeatedly locks
- Symptoms do not improve after a period of physiotherapy
- There is a significant traumatic tear in a younger, active person

Your orthopaedic specialist will discuss risks and benefits if surgery is considered.

### **Recovery and outlook**

- Many people improve with exercises alone
- Swelling and discomfort can take several weeks to settle
- Staying active within comfort helps recovery
- Long-term outcomes are usually good with appropriate rehabilitation

### **What to avoid early on**

- Deep squatting or twisting movements
- Sudden increases in activity
- Prolonged kneeling

### **When to seek urgent medical advice**

Seek medical help urgently if you have:

- A locked knee that cannot fully bend or straighten
- Severe pain or swelling after injury
- Inability to weight-bear
- Signs of infection (redness, heat, fever)

### **Key messages**

- Meniscus tears are common and often manageable without surgery
- Physiotherapy and exercise are key to recovery
- Scans and surgery are not always needed

If knee symptoms are affecting your daily life, speak to your GP or physiotherapist for assessment and guidance.