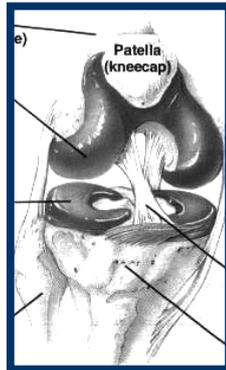




## Frequently Asked Questions: Torn Meniscus (Cartilage)

### What is the meniscus (cartilage)?

The meniscus is a C-shaped piece of rubbery tissue which is located at the edges of the joint.



### What is the function of the meniscus?

The main function is shock absorption. It lowers the stress applied to the articular cartilage, and thereby has a role in preventing the development of arthritis.

### Will the tear heal itself?

Most of the meniscus has no blood supply. For that reason the meniscus is unable to undergo the normal healing process that occurs in most of the rest of the body. In addition, with age, the meniscus begins to deteriorate, often developing tears without significant injury.

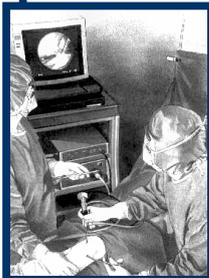
### What problems occur after the meniscus tears?

When the meniscus is damaged, the torn piece begins to move in an abnormal fashion inside the joint.

Because the space between the bones of the joint is very small, as the abnormally mobile piece of tissue moves, it may become caught between the bones of the joint. When this happens, the knee becomes painful, swollen, and difficult to move.



Left: Torn medial meniscus with fragment located at peripheral aspect of joint. Below: set up in operating room for arthroscopy.



### Will I get arthritis after the meniscus is removed?

Once the meniscus is damaged it does not function as a shock absorber. It usually needs to be removed. The advantage of an arthroscopy operation is that just the damaged portion can be removed. As much of the

normal tissues is left in tact as possible minimizing the chance of arthritis in the future.

Right: Torn meniscus fragment dislocated into knee joint.



### What is the treatment?

Arthroscopy involves inserting a fiberoptic telescope that is about the size of a pencil into the joint through a 2cm incision. Then, using miniature instruments the structures are



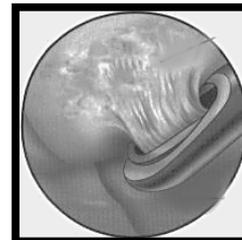
examined and the surgery is performed.

Left: Looking down into the knee. Showing Tear with Fragment Removal. Below: chondroplasty (smoothing the surface of the joint).

### What is the recovery period?

Arthroscopy causes much less disruption to the muscles, ligaments and tissues than the traditional method of opening the knee. Most patients are able to walk without crutches out of the hospital.

*You should be able to return to light duties after 10 days. If you have a heavy job it may take 3 - 4 weeks to get back.*



You will be given an information sheet regarding exercises following the surgery.

Occasionally, it is possible to repair a torn meniscus. The recovery time is longer than simply removing the torn piece of meniscus (meniscectomy). Unfortunately, as a person gets older (>25 yrs), the possibility of the tear being repairable greatly decreases.

### What are the possible complications?

Complications are very unusual with arthroscopy. It is a safe operation. However they can occur. These include the following: Severe: reaction to anaesthetic and blood clots in the legs.

Less severe: infection