

## Protecting and Repairing Meniscal Injuries



**A**lthough some athletes return to the game soon after a meniscal injury and others take months to recover, there is a good reason for this variation. To repair this athletic injury, especially common in soccer or football, treatment depends on the type and severity of the injury, the activity level of the patient and the response to treatment.

**The menisci are discs of cartilage that fill the area between the large upper thigh bone and the shin bone, acting as shock absorbers at the knee joint.** If a movement stresses the meniscus, it can subsequently become torn or damaged.

Most tears can be treated with physical therapy and exercise, along with anti-inflammatory medications or cortisone injections. Typically, patients who need surgery may have a “partial” meniscectomy—where the torn portion of the meniscus is removed—or a repair that requires joining the torn edges with sutures.

After a partial meniscectomy, physical therapy can usually start within a few days, when bearing weight is comfortable and can be tolerated. After a meniscal repair, the patient can also begin physical therapy within a few days but will sometimes need to refrain from weight bearing for approximately four to six weeks, depending on the extent of the tear. Slow, steady weight bearing would follow this period of healing, although it can be several months before the patient can return to sports.

Regardless of the initial treatment, our first focus will be to reduce the swelling and inflammation, and relieve pain. When this inflammation is under control, subsequent exercises can effectively strengthen the knee muscles. Such exercises are designed to

- **control exercise progression to avoid injury,**
- **encourage gentle improvement of strength** and
- **facilitate complete range-of-motion.**

Proper aftercare and consistent exercises will encourage healing, prevent any future injuries and let you return to your sport within a reasonable amount of time. Talk to us about an exercise regimen devised especially for you.