



Tear of the Lateral Meniscus

ROSENBERG COOLEY METCALF

THE ORTHOPEDIC CLINIC AT PARK CITY

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DIAGNOSIS: Your **diagnosis** is a tear of the lateral meniscus.

INJURY or CONDITION: This **injury** is a disruption of the fibrocartilage (meniscus) which absorbs shock and lubricates the weight-bearing compartment of the knee.

CAUSE: The most common **cause** is excessive pressure and torsional force applied to the fibrocartilage (meniscus) of the outside (lateral) aspect of the knee. This usually occurs, often as an unrecognized event, during a twisting or hyperflexion (excessive bending) injury to the knee.

SYMPTOMS: Typical **symptoms** are pain localized at the outside (lateral) aspect of the knee usually aggravated by vigorous activities and squatting. Mechanical symptoms of catching, popping or even locking may occur. Discomfort is often noted at night and descending stairs.

TREATMENT: Our standard **treatment** usually includes:

1. Observation of symptoms for at least 4-6 weeks. Spontaneous healing is uncommon in adults, but may occur in some cases.
2. Safe strengthening activities such as cycling which avoid twisting and hyperflexion.
3. Optional anti-inflammatory medication (Diclofenac/Voltaren or Ibuprofen/Motrin) for 1-2 weeks.
4. Arthroscopic surgery to trim the damaged meniscus. Partial regeneration is often stimulated at the same time. Meniscal tears that require trimming are those that don't have a good blood supply.
5. Arthroscopic surgery to repair a freshly damaged meniscus. Recovery takes longer but all tissue is restored. Meniscal tears that are repairable have good blood supply.

PRECAUTIONS: Important **precautions**:

1. For non-surgical treatment, you should avoid sports activities which lead to significant pain.
2. Anti-inflammatory medications are a temporary measure, not for prolonged treatment.
3. Cortisone injections should generally be avoided because they may mask the condition and leading to more permanent damage.
4. A tear of the lateral meniscus is often associated with ligament damage, especially an ACL injury.

RECOVERY: Expected **recovery** after arthroscopic trimming of the damaged meniscus (partial meniscectomy) takes 2-8 weeks depending on the severity of the tear.

