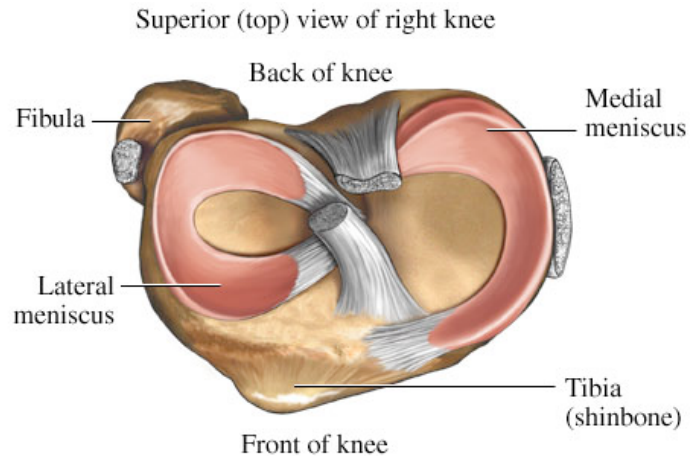


Meniscus Tear

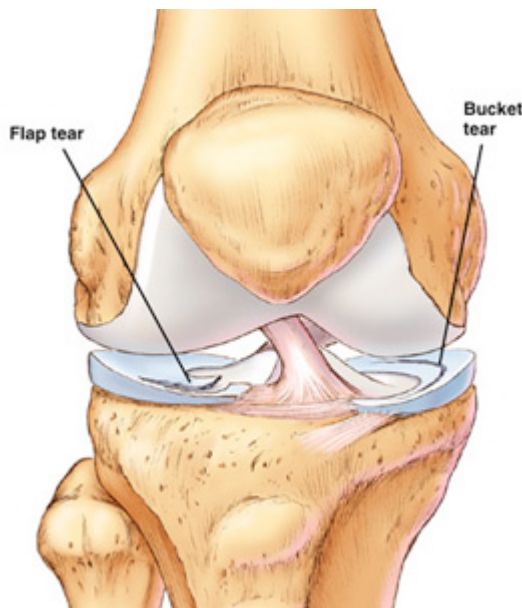
What is the Meniscus?

The meniscus is cartilaginous tissue that acts as a shock absorber for joints. In the knee two menisci lie between the femur and the tibia. The meniscus provides a cushion between the bones and helps to distribute body weight in the knee joint.



What Causes a Meniscus Tear?

There are several ways in which the meniscus can be compromised, but there are two common ways to experience a tear. First, meniscus tears can occur from a traumatic event that usually involves a twisting motion, over flexing the knee, or a blow to the side of the knee. When this occurs it increases the compression and load on the meniscus causing it to tear. Second, degeneration of the meniscus over an extended period of time can also cause it to tear. As we age the meniscus loses its elasticity, and the ability to withstand loads and shear forces is diminished. When there is enough degeneration a tear can occur from a simple activity such as squatting down.



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What are the Symptoms of a Tear?

Symptoms of an acute or traumatic meniscus tear may be described as a “pop” felt followed by pain and swelling in the knee joint. If the tear is caused by degeneration the pain may be described as a gradual onset of pain at the knee joint line on either side of the knee. Typically a loss

of knee range of motion may occur due to difficulty straightening the knee or “locking” of the knee. Popping or clicking may also be described in the knee joint. Activities such as squatting or kneeling will increase the pain.

Treatment

Treatment options should start by contacting an orthopedic specialist. Meniscus tears are usually diagnosed after taking a careful history and performing diagnostic exams. An X-ray will show any degenerative or arthritic changes of bone, not soft tissue. An MRI shows the soft tissue of the knee joint and most likely will reveal if there is a meniscus tear.

Due to the poor blood supply of the meniscus, healing without surgical intervention is rare. However, if the tear is small and in the “red-zone” of blood supply your orthopedic specialist may want to attempt conservative care. Surgical treatment will vary from specialist to specialist. The current progressive mindset in the orthopedic field is to attempt preservation of the meniscus at all cost. This is done to prevent long-term osteoarthritis in the joint. Non-surgical treatment consists of rest, ice, compression if there is swelling, anti-inflammatory medication and physical therapy. Physical therapy will attempt to mitigate the effects of the tear, and increase the strength of the lower extremity to assist with shock absorption, and increase space to the joint.

If you would like more information about this issue, or need a physician referral in your area, please call us at 310-860-9720.