

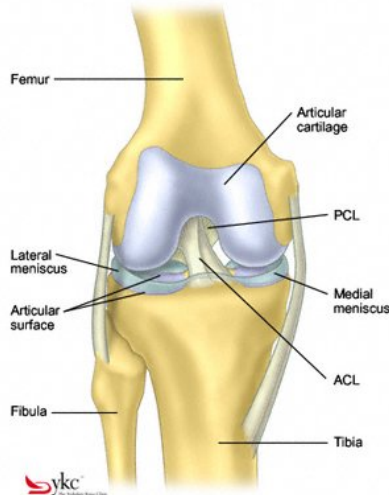


ChildrensHospitalLosAngeles

International Leader in Pediatrics

Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Tear

What is an ACL tear?



The anterior cruciate ligament is one of the ligaments (similar to a rope) that connects the thigh-bone (femur) to the shin-bone (tibia) to prevent the shin-bone from sliding forward. It is one of the two ligaments inside the knee joint to keep it stable. A tear of the ACL usually is due to the knee being forced into an abnormal position. This can occur with a direct blow to the knee during sports or when you are running, cutting, or stopping abruptly.

How do you know if you have an ACL tear?

An ACL tear is diagnosed with history and physical examination by a doctor. The doctor may also need x-rays and an MRI study to further evaluate the inside of the knee.

<http://www.yorkshirekneeclinic.com/images/A4.jpg>

How do you treat an ACL tear?

If you have a partial tear of the ACL you may not need surgery but you will need physical therapy/rehabilitation to strengthen your knee and regain your range of motion as well as a knee brace to protect your knee. Whether or not you need surgery will depend on the history, physical examination, and the MRI study. Your doctor will discuss this with you at your appointment.

A complete tear of the ACL is a more serious injury. Many factors determine if you will need surgery including activity level and age. If you are a competitive athlete or participate in sports most likely you will need surgery to reconstruct the ACL if you want to continue playing sports.

There are different types of surgeries to reconstruct the ACL. Usually the surgery is done as an out-patient, meaning you will not stay overnight in the hospital. Most of the time the surgery is done through small incisions on the front of the knee using an arthroscope (camera), but sometimes the surgery may require larger incisions. Surgery involves using a strip of tendon from another tendon in your leg (either the iliotibial band tendon or hamstring tendon) or using a cadaver (donated) tendon to reconstruct the ACL. Determining which type of surgery will be discussed between the doctor and your family.

This handout is to be used for educational purposes only. Questions or concerns should be discussed with your physician.