

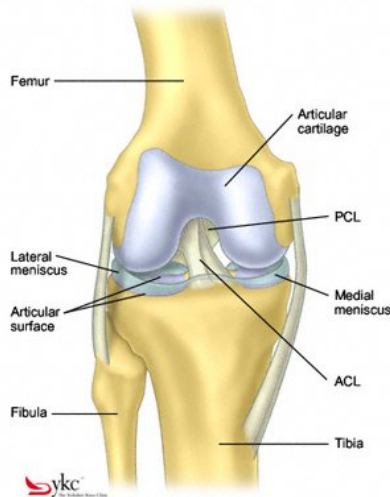


**ChildrensHospitalLosAngeles**

*International Leader in Pediatrics*

## Meniscus Tear

### What is a meniscal tear?



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

There are two menisci or wedge-shaped cartilage in the knee joint, one called the medial (towards the middle) and the other called lateral (towards the outside of the knee). The meniscus acts like a pillow in the knee joint to cushion and absorb shock in the area between the femur (thigh-bone) and the tibia (shin-bone). Usually a tear of a meniscus in children is due to trauma or the result of a compression or weight-bearing stress with a twisting mechanism of the knee.

### How do you know if you have a meniscal tear?

Meniscal tears may or may not produce swelling, pain, popping, clicking, or locking of the knee. A meniscal 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.

### How do you treat a meniscal tear?

In most cases, meniscal tears are treated with surgery. However, many factors influence the need for surgery, including age and activity level. Based on your physical exam and imaging studies (x-ray, MRI), your doctor will discuss whether or not you need surgery. If you are a competitive athlete or participate in sports most likely you will need surgery.

There are two different types of surgery that may be done to the torn meniscus- meniscal repair and meniscectomy (or shaving away of the meniscus). Usually the surgery is done as an outpatient, 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). The decision of which type of surgery is based on many factors including the pattern and location of the tear, the stability of the tear, and the predictability of healing of the torn meniscus. The preferred choice in children is to repair the meniscal tear by using suture (or stitches) in order to save as much meniscus as possible. However, there is a portion of the meniscus that does not receive adequate blood supply to allow for healing of the meniscus after surgery. If the tear is in this portion of the meniscus, there is a high likelihood that it will not heal after surgery, requiring a meniscectomy or shaving of the meniscal tear instead of a meniscal repair. Any meniscus that is removed will not grow back. 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.