

## MENISCAL INJURY

A meniscal injury refers to damage to one of the two C-shaped cartilages which separate the bones in the knee joint. These cartilages act as shock absorbers within the knee to assist in cushioning forces



The menisci in the knee are most commonly injured when the knee is twisted or if a fellow competitor hits your knee causing it to buckle. The primary symptoms consist of pain, swelling (up to 24 hours) in the knee joint and sometimes an inability to put weight through the knee.

If you suspect a meniscal injury you should stop your activity immediately and commence the R.I.C.E regime. This consists of:

- **Rest** – ceasing your activity or sport and limiting the amount of weight which goes through your leg. Crutches may be required
- **Ice** – should be applied to the injured site for 15-20 minutes every 1-2 hours. Never apply ice directly to the skin, a damp cloth is a good medium
- **Compression** – involves the application of a firm elastic bandage around your knee
- **Elevation** – with the leg raised so that it is above the level of your heart

During the first 78 hours the **NO HARM** approach should be undertaken. This involves no:

- **Heat**
- **Alcohol**
- **Running**
- **Massage**

In the few days following a potential meniscal injury you should seek the professional opinion of a physiotherapist or sports doctor. A physiotherapist will be able to determine which tissues have been damaged and the extent of this damage, subsequently determining an appropriate treatment regimen.

A physiotherapist or sports doctor may need the assistance of an X-RAY or MRI to assess the true severity of the injury and to determine if other structures in the knee are affected. Surgical intervention is often the treatment of choice if a meniscal injury is followed by persistent knee swelling, clicking, locking and giving way.

If it is considered only a minor meniscal injury then physiotherapy alone can be used as the sole treatment choice. In this situation physiotherapy may consist of:

- Ultrasound therapy
- Interferential therapy
- Massage
- Joint mobilisation
- Exercise prescription
- Stretching
- Proprioception exercises

All of these treatment options are designed to reduce swelling and pain, improve your joint flexibility and strengthen the muscles around your knee joint.