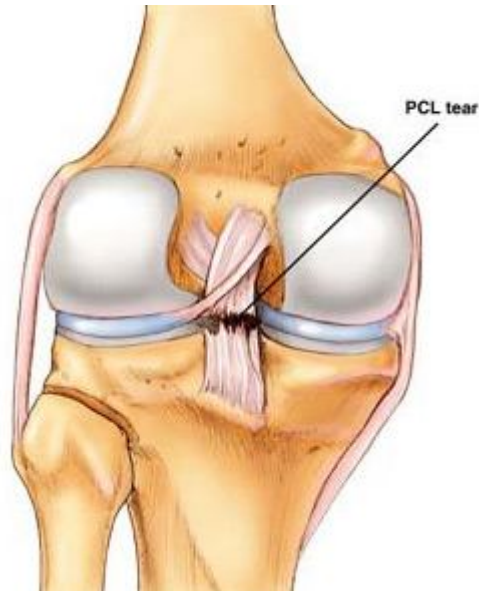


POSTERIOR CRUCIATE LIGAMENT (PCL) INJURY

A posterior cruciate ligament or 'PCL' injury refers to a tear in one of the cruciate ligaments inside the knee joint.



(Back of the knee)

The PCL is most commonly injured when the knee is hyperextended or, in other words, bent backwards. This can happen if you land from jumping with the knee straight or is a fellow competitor hits the front of your knee.

A PCL injury is associated with pain deep within the knee or at the back of the knee. This may be accompanied with an audible snap, crack or tear. The knee may also swell and you may have difficulty putting weight through the knee. Swelling can occur over a period of hours

If you suspect a PCL 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 PCL 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, such as menisci or neighbouring ligaments. Surgical intervention is often the treatment of choice if a PCL injury is followed by persistent knee swelling, locking, giving way or if the PCL is detached completely from the bone.

If the PCL injury is considered suitable physiotherapy then a comprehensive rehabilitation program can usually get the patient back to sport in a matter of months. 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.