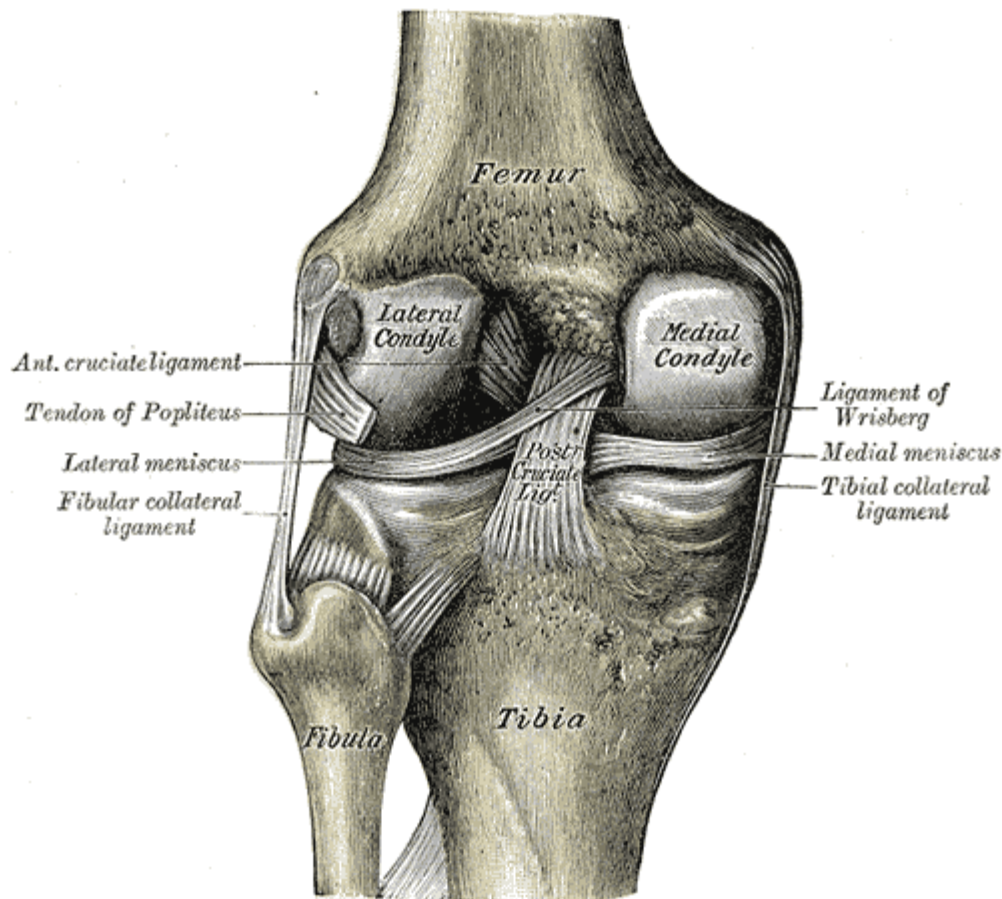


Degenerative Meniscal tear

Menisci are the cartilage disks that are found in our knees. There are two in each knee (one lateral and one medial) which act as shock absorbers and cushions to minimise the stress on the articular cartilage which cover the ends of our bones. If we damage our menisci, this can cause extra stress to our articular cartilage, which could trigger the onset of osteoarthritis. Meniscus tears are not the only cause of osteoarthritis but they are certainly a contributing factor.



There are two different ways which we can injure our menisci. One is an acute injury where a sudden high load or force causes a tear across the meniscus, which might happen with a sports injury. The other is known as a degenerative meniscus injury which is a more gradual onset and tends to occur as we get older. We are looking at a degenerative meniscal injury here but if you feel you have an acute meniscal injury please click on [this link](#).

Symptoms of degenerative meniscal tear can include:

- Pain, often localized to a specific aspect of the joint. This can often be characterized as sharp and catching, made worse with twisting and turn maneuvers
- Recurrent joint swelling
- Stiffness
- Locking

- Giving associated with pain

These symptoms can start with very little in the way of provocation. They can be due to incidents leading to a twisting of the knee but it is not uncommon to see onset of symptoms when the force involved is not too great.

Self help

In treating a degenerative meniscus it is absolutely key that you pay particular attention to lifestyle factors that affect joint health, this means keeping active, maintaining a healthy weight, and avoiding smoking.

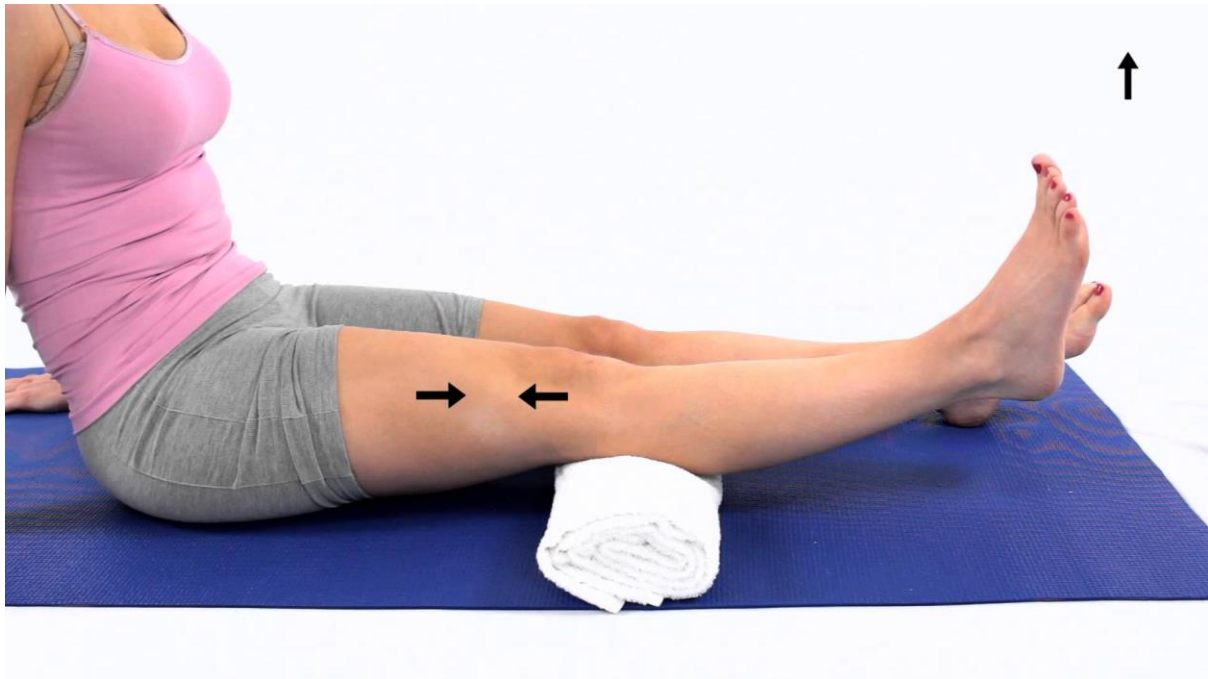
It is also key to manage your activity levels appropriately. Degenerative menisci don't tend to like big surprises so planning activity is important. You should:

- Maintain a level of regular activity to maintain good joint function
- Plan increases in activity methodically. For example if you are planning a walking holiday, make sure that you have walked the distances you intend to cover before hand. If not train yourself before you go.

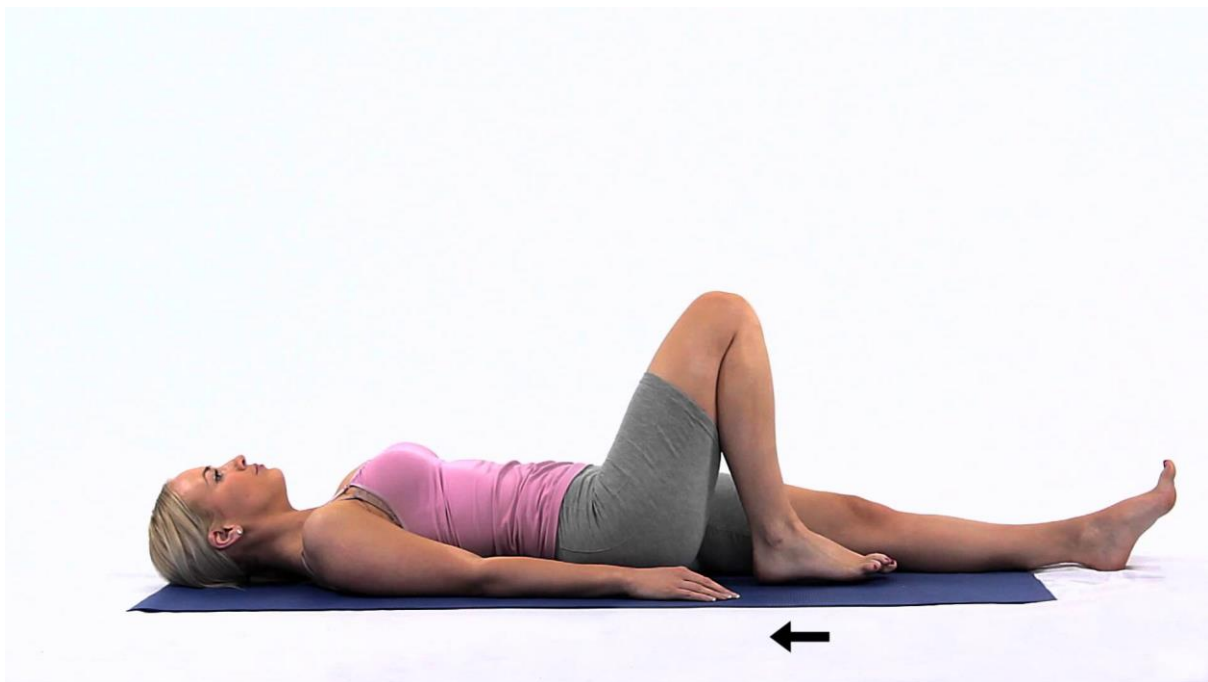
If you are currently experiencing a flare up of symptoms you should follow the RICE protocol. RICE stands for:

- Rest: Try and do as little as possible with the injured area for 48-72 hours after injury
- Ice: Ice should be applied around the area regularly in the first 72 hours after injury as often as every 2-3 hours. If you don't have an Ice pack to hand try a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel. Always protect your skin from the risk of frostbite by using a damp towel or flannel between the ice and your skin. Check the iced area regularly during treatment every 5-10 minutes. There is not much benefit from applying ice for more than 15 minutes in one treatment session. The video below shows a method for repeating ice packs in the first few days after injury.
- Compression: A special compression bandage can be obtained for most soft tissue injuries from your local pharmacy.
- Elevation: Keeping the injured area elevated can reduce swelling.

When you have undertaken the acute soft tissue treatment you should try to regain your range of motion, the ability to full straighten and fully bend your knee, while maintaining as much muscle function as possible. These exercises may be of help.



- Place a rolled up towel under your knee
- Tighten your quadriceps (front thigh muscle) and use it to straighten your knee
- Your heel should lift away from the floor
- Hold for 10 seconds and then slowly relax.
- Repeat up to 10 times



- Laying down, slide your foot towards your bottom to bend your knee
- Then return the knee to a straightened position

- Repeat the movement for 30seconds to a minute
- Repeat the exercise regularly through the day

Further Treatment

Recovery phase – Once you have noticed your knee starting to feel somewhat easier with the early management it is a good idea to start to think about recovery:

- Regaining full flexibility
- Regaining full strength
- Returning to previous levels of activity

If you are struggling to return to your normal activity levels or your knee is not settling, ask your GP about a referral to the MSK service.