

Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Injury

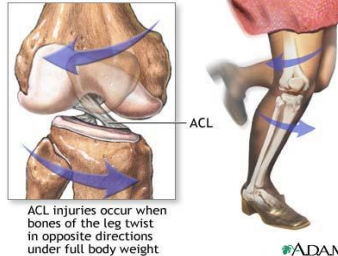
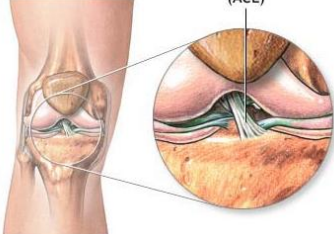
AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY



What is it?

- The Anterior Cruciate Ligament is the most important stabilising ligament found inside the knee.
- It is most commonly injured when a large twisting and bending force is applied to the knee joint.

Front of right knee Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL)



What do I look for?

- At the time of injury a large pop is usually heard with marked pain felt inside the knee joint. Shortly thereafter pain may subside.
- The athlete may feel confident to return to sport but will have significant instability and giving way of the joint on any change of direction task, and be unable to continue.
- Significant swelling of the knee joint will follow within a 1-2 hour period.

What causes it?

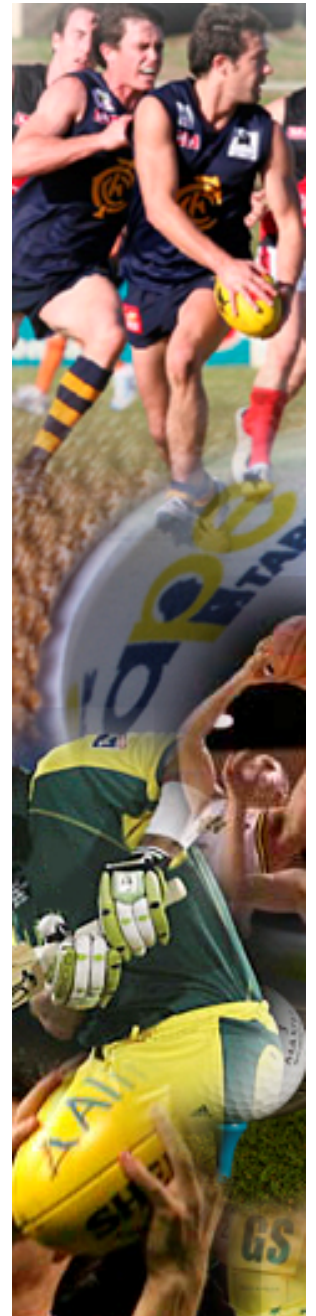
- The ACL is generally torn due to high levels of force being transmitted through the knee joint. Gender seems to be a predisposing factor with females being at a 5x greater risk of rupturing the ACL compared to males.
- It is supposed that good prehab programs aimed at strength and balance may reduce the incidence of these injuries occurring.

How can this be treated?

- A complete rupture of the ACL more often than not will require surgical intervention to fix the ligament. If it is only partially torn then a conservative rehabilitation program may be appropriate.
- Traditional operative repair uses either parts of the hamstring or Patella tendon to replace the torn ACL. Newer techniques (LARS) are using a synthetic graft.
- A proper rehabilitation and specific exercise program is crucial post operatively to ensure a full return to fitness. This is best supervised and managed by a physiotherapist.
- Rehabilitation usually takes around 9-11 months for the traditional repair and around 4-6 months for the LARS repairs. There is some concern about the long term viability of the LARS repairs however, and these do not suit all individuals.

Do I see my doctor?

- Your physiotherapist should refer you to an appropriate medical practitioner if an ACL injury is suspected.



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