

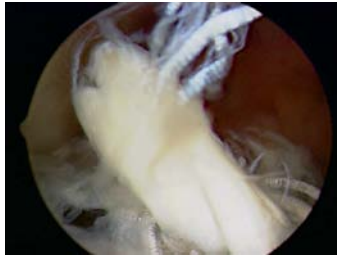


Orthopaedic Surgery
& Sports Medicine

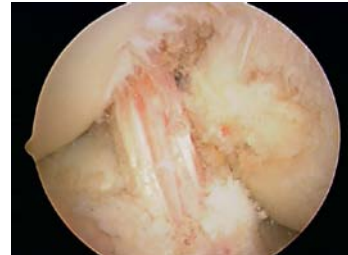
ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) tears



Normal ACL



Torn ACL



Repaired ACL

Description

An anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tear is a tear of one of the four major ligaments of the knee. The ACL is a ropelike structure that helps maintain the normal relationship of the femur (thigh bone) and the tibia (leg bone) and keeps the tibia from sliding forward. This ligament is most important in sports that require pivoting, changing direction (cutting), or jumping and landing. When torn, this ligament does not heal. It may attach by scar tissue to other structures of the knee. About half the people who tear their ACL also have torn meniscus cartilage.

Common signs and symptoms

- Swelling with repeated ‘giving way’ and/or present feeling of instability
- Usually associated with a moderate amount of pain
- Unable to continue current activity
- Occasional ‘locking’ when there is concurrent injury to the meniscus cartilage

Causes

Force that exceeds the strength of the ligament:

- Landing awkwardly
- Cutting while foot is planted on the ground
- Direct blow to the knee

Risk of further injury

- Frequent recurrence of symptoms, such as knee giving way, instability, and swelling
- Injury to meniscal cartilage, resulting in locking and swelling of the knee
- Injury to other structures of the knee that could result in arthritis of the knee
- Injury to other ligaments of the knee
- Knee stiffness (loss of knee motion)

- Further injury can occur with sports that require pivoting, jumping, cutting and changing direction (basketball, soccer, volleyball, tennis) or contact sports (football, rugby)
- Further injury can also occur from poor physical conditioning or improper equipment

Our staff is available 24 hours a day in case you experience a problem after you leave the hospital. During business hours, 8 am to 5 pm, call (859) 323-5533. After hours call (859) 323-5321 and ask for the sports medicine physician on call.

Notify our office if...

- **Symptoms get worse or do not improve in 4- 6 weeks despite treatment**
- **New, unexplained symptoms develop (drugs used in treatment may produce side effects)**