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Meniscus Tear

What is a meniscus tear?

- The meniscus is a piece of cartilage in the middle of your knee. Cartilage is tough, smooth, rubbery tissue that lines and cushions the surface of the joints. There is a meniscus on the inner and outer side of the knee, Medial Meniscus and Lateral Meniscus. They attach to the top of the shin bone(tibia), make contact with the thigh bone(femur), and act as shock absorbers during weight-bearing activities.

How does a meniscus tear occur?

- A meniscus tear can occur when the knee is forcefully twisted or occasionally with minimal or no trauma, such as when you are squatting.

What are the symptoms of a meniscus tear?

- You may have pain in your knee joint. You may have swelling with fluid in the joint, called effusion. You may be unable to fully bend or straighten your leg. Your knee may lock or get stuck in one place. You may hear a snap or pop at the time of injury. A chronic (old) meniscus tear may give you pain on and off during activities, with or without swelling. Your knee may occasionally lock and you may have stiffness in the knee.

How is a meniscus tear diagnosed?

- Your doctor will examine your knee and find that you have tenderness along the joint line. Your doctor will move your knee in several ways that may cause pain along the injured meniscal surface. An x-ray will be ordered to see if there are injuries to the bones in your knee, but a meniscus tear will not show up on an x-ray. An MRI is useful when diagnosing a meniscus tear.

How is a meniscus tear treated?

- Treatment may include any of the following:
 - Ice 20 minutes 2-3 times per day
 - Elevation on a stack of pillows
 - Compression with an ACE wrap
 - Wearing a knee brace
 - Using crutches
 - Taking anti-inflammatory or pain medications
- Surgery may be required to remove or repair large torn pieces of cartilage. This procedure is called a Knee Arthroscopy.