

Knee injury

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have a soft tissue knee injury. It includes information about what a soft tissue knee injury is, how it is treated and what to do when you get home.

What is a soft tissue knee injury?

The knee is a complex hinge joint which is designed to take the full weight of your body and any extra force when you run or jump. Its stability relies mainly on:

Ligaments – which are strong rope-like structures that connect one bone to another and help hold the knee joint together.

Meniscus – this is the cartilage tissue which acts as a shock absorber in the knee joint.

Muscles – which surround the knee joint.

Any one or more of these structures can be injured.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can vary depending on which part of the knee is injured. Acute knee injuries will usually cause pain, swelling and/or bruising. It may also cause the knee to lock or give way.

X-rays do not show the soft tissues of the knee.

Healing normally takes about six weeks but everyone heals at a different rate so some injuries will take longer to heal. Healing time will also depend on how serious your injury is.

How is it treated?

For the knee injury to recover, you need to:

- **Protect** your knee from being knocked to avoid further injury.
- **Rest** – do not do any activities that will cause your knee more pain. Do this for the first two days.
- **Ice** – apply ice on your knee to reduce any swelling. You can use crushed ice or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel. Do this for 10 minutes every four to six hours. **Caution** – ice can cause burns so do not apply it directly to your skin.
- **Elevation** – lift your leg up with your foot above the level of your bottom or as high as you can comfortably manage. Do this for the first two days.

If you have pain, take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, if you can take them (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose).

How do I prevent further injury to my knee?

In the first 48 to 72 hours, it is important to **avoid the following**:

- **Heat** as this increases blood flow and swelling.
- **Alcohol** – this increases blood flow and swelling, and will slow down the healing process. It will also make it dangerous for you to start moving around.
- **Running** as this may cause further damage.

- **Massage** – this promotes blood flow and can increase swelling; therefore, it can increase the damage if it is begun too early.

Exercise

When pain allows, continue to move the injured area. If you do not move the injured joint, it will become stiff and the pain will increase. Walking will help your recovery. Wear supportive, flat shoes and avoid standing still. Avoid sports and heavy exercise until fully recovered.

We advise you to exercise your leg while resting it. The following exercises will strengthen your ligaments and muscles. Repeat the exercises at least three times a day. Start with two sets of 10 of each exercise. Build up to three sets of 10 and increase the weight gradually.

- Point your foot up towards you and point it down again.
- Wiggle your toes.
- Circle your ankle keeping your knee straight
- Turn the soles of your feet towards and away from each other.

What if the pain does not go?

If the pain continues after two to three weeks and you have not been given a follow up appointment, please contact your GP for further advice.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblink:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Sprains/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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