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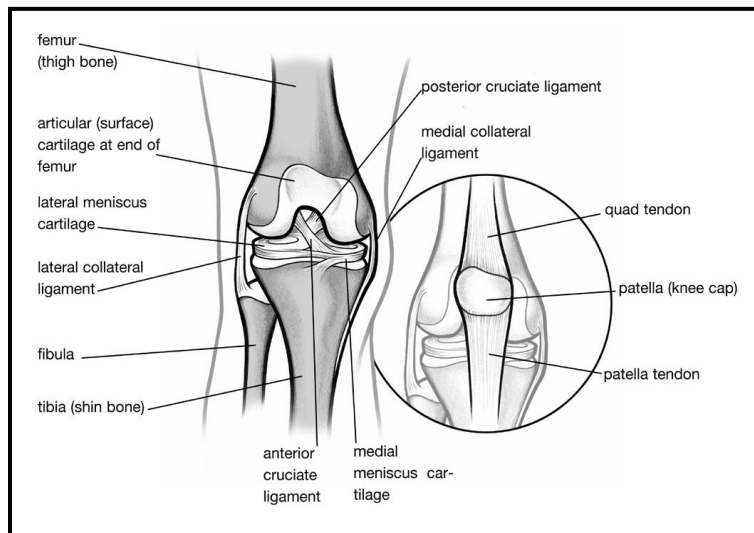
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COLLATERAL LIGAMENT INJURIES

INTRODUCTION

The medial collateral ligament, or inside ligament, is one of the more commonly injured ligaments in the body, tearing due to a stress that comes from the outside part of your knee (forcing the knee into a "knock-kneed position"). The lateral collateral ligament, or outside ligament, is less commonly injured as it is unusual to get that type of bending force to the knee.

Luckily, medial collateral ligament injuries will heal without surgery in the vast majority of cases. As one side of your knee stretches, the other side compresses. This will occasionally result in a tear to the meniscal cartilage or a bone bruise to the surface cartilage. If the knee is not responding normally, sometimes an MRI scan is ordered to diagnose one of these cartilage injuries.



As with collateral ligament injuries to your ankle and other joints of the body, you are allowed to do **straight ahead motions** as soon as you are comfortable. The key is to avoid twisting motions, as this puts inappropriate stress on the healing fibers. Classification of ligament injuries with ballpark recovery periods are as follows:

Grade I: A mild sprain of the ligament without significant tearing of fibers. Recovery Time: ~ 3 weeks.

Grade II: Some fibers torn and laxity can be felt when ligament is examined. Recovery Time: ~ 4-6 weeks.

Grade III: Complete tear of the ligament. Recovery Time: ~ 6-12 weeks.

MCL PROGRAM

The first step for a collateral ligament injury, as with any injury, is to decrease the swelling and pain. (See Ice & Medication Instructions) The use of crutches is mandatory until you are able to walk without pain or a limp. This will take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, depending on the severity of your injury. Once swelling and pain is under control, you may begin your range of motion (ROM) stretches. If you have access to water, ask for a copy of our water training program (also available on our website). Bicycling, stair master, elliptical, and rowing machines are all safe and encouraged. Again, these types of motions are not putting undue stress on the collateral ligament and will help to strengthen it appropriately. Your body will not repair tissues that are not in use and thus, proper stress is necessary for healing. Stress does not mean pain or swelling. If you are experiencing either, particularly the next day, you are overdoing it and need to cut back on your program.