

Meniscal 'Cartilage' Issues

Information for Patients



This leaflet has been written to give you the right information about meniscal issues and what you can do to help with your recovery.

What is a meniscus and what does it do?

A meniscus is a structure in your knee that has many roles, but its main one is to help with the cushioning between your femur (thigh) and your tibia (shin). Most people will know their meniscus by a different name, that name being 'cartilage'.

What causes meniscal problems?

In most cases, either doing more of something (walking/kneeling/running), doing something new or different (new job or hobby) or simply doing less and then getting back into activity (e.g. heavy gardening in the spring after doing less in the winter) can be enough to cause an irritation. Being overweight or having an injury can also cause meniscal issues.

What are the common symptoms?

Pain: Discomfort is often around the knee but can sometimes be more obvious in certain places i.e. the inside or the front. In some cases, the pain may travel down the shin or up the thigh.

Stiffness: Whilst your knee is sore, you can expect to find that certain movements (such as bending) may be difficult; this is normal.

Noises: Clicks, pops, clunks and grinds are very normal in all joints, including your knee, and in most cases are nothing to worry about.

Catching or giving way: In some cases, an irritated meniscus may cause the feeling of giving way or catching. In rare cases, a meniscal injury can cause the knee to feel stuck or locked.

What can I do to help myself?

Calm it down: Often the best place to start with any painful complaint is to try and calm it down. In a lot of cases there will be things your knee likes to do and some things that it is less happy to do. Calming it down simply means looking at the things it doesn't like and trying to make some adjustments or changes to make it easier for yourself. For example,

walking for a long time or going up/downstairs may be uncomfortable, therefore taking more breaks whilst on your feet or taking one step at a time how often you cross your legs may be useful whilst your knee is unhappy.

Keep it moving: Try to move your knee as far as you can comfortably as often as you can. It may feel that moving a sore knee is one of the last things you want to do but it is something that can really help ease the problem over time.

Build it back up again: Movement is medicine for your body. Any movement is good movement, even if it is sore, however if something is really painful then working around that movement is sensible.

Your knee is strong and that won't have changed since your symptoms started. Although it is sore, it remains robust and moving your leg as early as you can, will help improve your chances of a better overall outcome.

Will it get better?

For most people, knee pain will not be a pleasant experience but reassuringly, it does have the potential to get better. By understanding the issue as best you can and by adjusting what is sore to then allow you to explore some exercise/s, is often the best formula for success.

If you would like to know more about meniscal issues or find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

Search online: [Norfolk and Waveney MSK services](#) 'meniscal issues'

Exercises



On the bed. Slide your heel towards your bottom and away again.
Complete little and often throughout the day.



Place a chair behind you. Slowly lower your bottom down to the chair, briefly touch your bottom to the chair (do not sit down) and rise up.
Aim to work until your legs tire. Complete little and often throughout the day.



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