


Meniscus Tear: Rehabilitation Exercises

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Meniscus Tear: Rehabilitation Exercises

A meniscus tear is a common knee joint injury. How well the knee will heal and whether surgery will be needed depends in large part on the type of tear (See figure in appendix) and how bad the tear is. Work with your doctor to plan a rehabilitation (rehab) program that helps you regain as much strength and flexibility in your knee as possible. Your rehab program probably will include physical therapy and home exercises.

Exercises that might be prescribed for rehab are listed here. Work with your doctor and physical therapist to design a program that will best help you reach your rehab goals.

- A coordinated program of physical therapy and home exercises can advance healing in your knee and help you return to desired activities.
- Building strength and flexibility in your knee and legs may help prevent future degeneration in your knee.



How do I do exercise to heal my meniscus?



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For most tears, some simple exercises can help maintain muscle strength in the front of the thigh (quadriceps), back of the thigh (hamstrings), calf, and hip. All of these areas are important for your overall leg function while your knee heals after an injury or after surgery. Exercises should only be done on the advice of your doctor and only if you feel very minimal or no pain while you do them at home.

The list below has links to specific exercises with pictures and instructions.

- Quad sets (See figure in appendix)
- Straight-leg raise to the front (See figure in appendix)
- Straight-leg raise to the back (See figure in appendix)
- Hamstring curls (See figure in appendix)
- Heel raises (See figure in appendix)
- Heel dig bridging (See figure in appendix)
- Shallow standing knee bends (See figure in appendix)

Credits for Meniscus Tear: Rehabilitation Exercises

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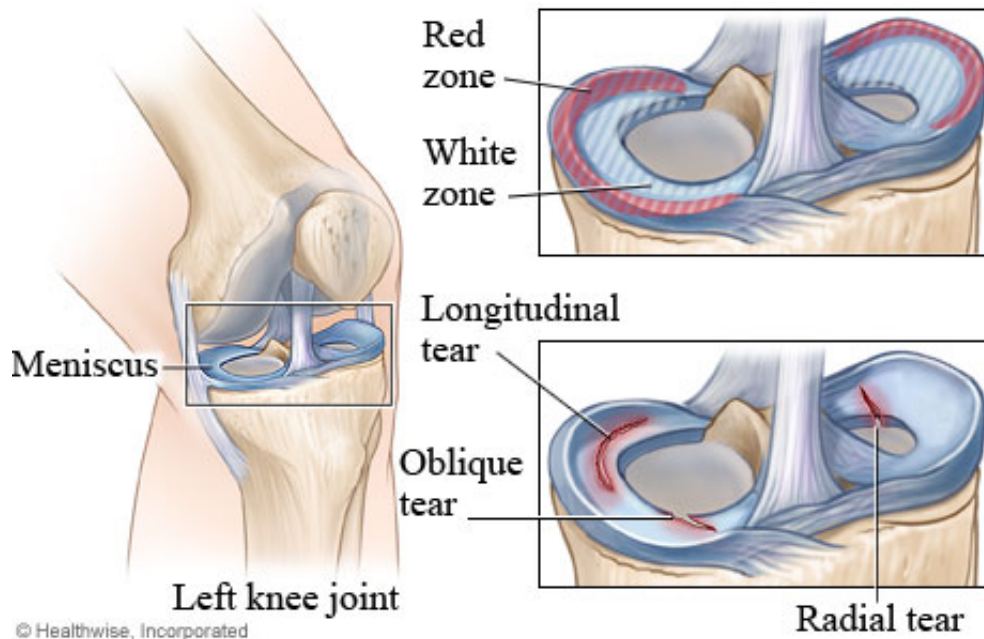
Appendix

Topic Images

Figure

Meniscus Tears





Where a meniscus tear occurs is one of the most important things that affects healing. Tears at the outer edge (red zone) tend to heal well because there is a good blood supply. The inner area (white zone) lacks a good blood supply and therefore does not heal well.

The type of tear often determines whether a tear can be repaired. Longitudinal tears are often repairable. Radial tears may be repairable depending on where they are located. Oblique (flap) tears and another type called horizontal tears are generally not repairable.

Figure

Quad Sets



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Quad sets help you build and maintain strength in the muscles on top of your thigh. With this action, you are "setting" these quadricep muscles by holding them tight. Do 8 to 12 repetitions several times during the day.

- Sit on the floor with your injured leg straight out in front of you.
- Tighten the muscles on top of your thigh by pressing the back of your knee flat down to the floor.
- Hold for about 6 seconds, then rest up to 10 seconds.

If you feel discomfort under your kneecap, try putting a small towel roll under your knee during this exercise.

Figure

Straight-Leg Raise to the Front



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These straight-leg raises help you strengthen the muscles on top of your thigh and around your hip. Do 8 to 12 repetitions.

- Lie on your back with your good knee bent so that your foot rests flat on the floor. Your injured leg should be straight. (During this exercise, your low back should have a normal curve. Your back has a normal curve if you can slip your flat hand in between the floor and the small of your back, with your palm touching the floor and your back touching the back of your hand.)
- Tighten the thigh muscles in the injured leg by pressing the back of your knee flat down to the floor. Hold your knee straight.
- Keeping the thigh muscles tight, lift your injured leg up so that your heel is about 12 in. (30 cm) off the floor. Hold for 5 seconds, then lower slowly.

Figure

Straight-Leg Raise to the Back



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These straight-leg raises help you strengthen the muscles in your buttocks and in the back of your thigh. Do 8 to 12 repetitions.

- Lie on your stomach, and lift your leg straight behind you (toward the ceiling).
- Lift your toes about 6 in. (15 cm) off the floor, hold for 5 seconds, then lower slowly.

Figure

Hamstring Curls



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Hamstring curls strengthen the muscles in the back of the thigh. Do 8 to 12 repetitions.

- Lie on your stomach with your knees straight. If your kneecap is uncomfortable, roll up a washcloth and put it under your leg just above your kneecap.
- Lift the foot of your injured leg by bending the knee so that you bring the foot up toward your buttocks. If this motion hurts, try it without bending your knee quite as far, in order to avoid any painful motion.
- You may also want to add a cuff weight to your ankle [not more than 5 lb (2 kg)], or use soup cans in a plastic bag with the loops around your ankle. With weight, you don't have to lift your leg more than 12 in. (30 cm) to get a hamstring workout.

Figure

Heel Raises



Heel raises strengthen the calf muscles. Do 8 to 12 repetitions several times during the day.

- Stand with your feet a few inches apart, with your hands lightly resting on a counter or chair in front of you.
- Slowly raise your heels off the floor while keeping your knees straight. Hold for about 6 seconds, then slowly lower your heels to the floor.

Figure

Heel Dig Bridging



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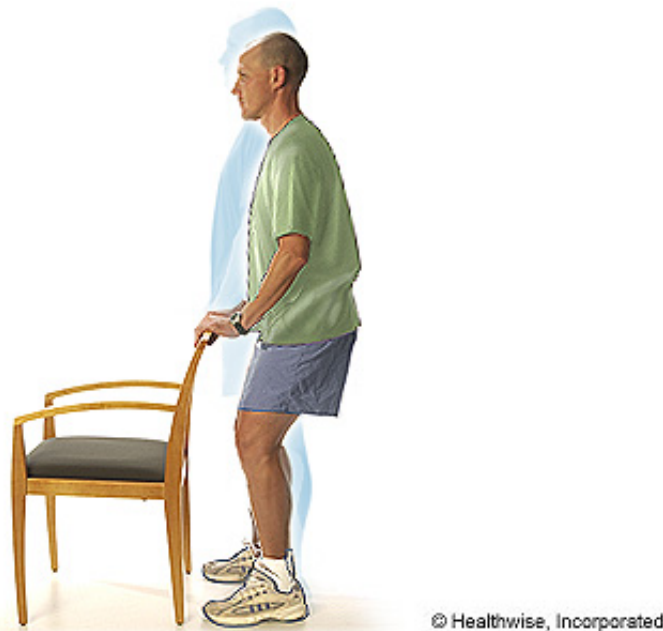
The heel dig bridging exercise works your hamstrings and the muscles around your

lower body and hips. Do 8 to 12 repetitions. Do not continue with this exercise if it causes pain.

- Lie on your back with both knees bent and your ankles bent so that only your heels are digging into the floor. At this point, your knees should be bent about 90 degrees.
- Tighten your belly muscles by pulling in your belly button toward your spine. Then push your heels into the floor, squeeze your buttocks, and lift your hips off the floor until your shoulders, hips, and knees are all in a straight line.
- Hold about 6 seconds as you continue to breathe normally, and then slowly lower your hips back down to the floor and rest for up to 10 seconds.

Figure

Shallow Standing Knee Bends



Shallow standing knee bends build strength in the muscles on top of your thigh. This exercise should only be done if you have very minimal pain; if you have no clicking, locking, or giving way in the injured knee; and if it doesn't hurt while you are doing 8 to 12 repetitions.

- Stand with your hands lightly resting on a counter or chair in front of you with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Slowly bend your knees so that you squat down just like you were going to sit in a chair. Make sure your knees don't go in front of your toes.
- Lower yourself about 6 in. (15 cm). Your heels should remain on the floor.
- Rise slowly to a standing position.



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