



Degenerative Meniscal Tear

What is a Degenerative Meniscal Tear?

A meniscal tear is damage to the meniscus that sits within your knee joint. Your meniscus assists with the rotational stability of your knee and shock absorption. Pain occurring with bending your knee, swelling, and tenderness around your knee joint and restricted range of movement may all be associated with a meniscal tear.

Why does it happen?

Degeneration of the meniscus can occur over time and is often associated with a gradual onset of pain and a flare-up of swelling within and around the knee. Degeneration of the meniscus can occur due to knee joint osteoarthritis, previous meniscal injury or from increased or sustained load through the knee.

What can a physiotherapist do?

A physiotherapist will first complete a thorough assessment of your knee to assist in determining the cause of your pain.

A physiotherapist will assist with the acute management of your knee by providing education and advice to help reduce the pain and swelling. Electrotherapy modalities may be used as well as gentle soft tissue massage. The physiotherapist may also issue a knee brace if required.

Once the swelling has subsided the physiotherapist will aim to increase the movement and strength of your knee. This will be done with a specific and graduated rehabilitation exercise program.

If your knee pain still remains after conservative physiotherapy treatment you may require an orthopaedic opinion.

What about sports/ work?

Return to sport and work can vary depending on the type of work or sport you perform, the extent of your injury and the management undertaken. Your physiotherapist will be able to discuss this with you further.

Outcome

Degenerative meniscal tears generally take time to settle. The recovery time is variable and may take from four to 12 weeks. Most small tears heal well without surgery. Those that do not respond to physiotherapy despite adequate rehabilitation and time will benefit from a surgical opinion.