

Meniscus Repair Vs. Meniscectomy

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The menisci are two “C” shaped pieces of cartilage that are located on the top of the tibia or shin bone in the knee joint. The menisci are wedge shaped to allow the joint to fit closely together. This displaces the forces on the joint and distributes them more evenly. This shape also gives the knee joint more stability. A meniscus or cartilage tear often occurs during a traumatic or sports injury, most often when the knee joint is bent and twisted. There are two types of surgery which are used to treat a meniscus tear.

A meniscal repair is a procedure that repairs the damaged meniscus. The torn piece is sutured to the meniscus and allows the meniscus to heal. This procedure maintains the structure of the knee joint and often has a better prognosis. However the surgery is more involved and the recovery is longer. Rehabilitation usually includes an immobilizing knee brace that keeps the knee straight and motion is gradually returned.

A repair is not always possible because of the circulation and healing capability of the meniscus. The outer edge of the meniscus is supplied by small blood vessels and the inner area is not well circulated. Therefore, damage to the inner cartilage will not heal and is typically not repaired.

A more common option is a meniscectomy which involves removing the damaged piece of meniscus. This is completed more often because the tear may be in an area that is not supplied well with blood or the tear is frayed and not able to be sutured. This recovery is faster, patients are able to walk within a day or two of surgery, however the absence of cartilage may cause future knee problems.

The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice or your own specific medical problems.