

Information for Patients

Surgery (an operation) to the knee for meniscal tears should only be carried out for a few clinical reasons. This is because we know that for most people with meniscal tears, their symptoms and the function of the knee will improve without an operation.

About the condition

The knee meniscus is a piece of tissue that acts as a cushion between the femur (thighbone) and tibia (shinbone). Tearing of the meniscus is one of the most common forms of knee injury. It can occur during sports or can be due to age-related wear and tear. Symptoms of a torn meniscus include pain, swelling, locking of the knee and an unstable knee. However, in many people a meniscal tear will produce no symptoms. Arthroscopic (or keyhole) surgery is performed using an instrument that is inserted into the knee joint through a small surgical cut.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the operation?

Most of the time an operation is not needed. In a very few cases surgery to either repair or cut out the bit of torn meniscus may help to improve a person's knee symptoms. If there are other injuries, such as ligament damage, then these may be repaired at the same time.

What are the **RISKS**?

The operation may not work to improve your symptoms. Also, there are risks of any surgery, which include bleeding, infection, pain, and how the anaesthetic may affect you.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

For some people physiotherapy, exercises to strengthen your muscles, losing weight and/or pain killers can help to improve your symptoms. You can discuss alternatives and what is best for you, with your doctor.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

Most knee symptoms improve with time and many people find that the injury does not affect their day to day activities. Doing nothing is unlikely to cause harm.

For more information see [Arthroscopy - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

You can find out more about the [Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online