



Melbourne **SPORTS** **PHYSIOTHERAPY**

Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Physiotherapy Rehabilitation.

Have you injured your ACL? Did you know that a 5 week intense prehab (rehab before surgery) gives you better knee strength and outcomes, both before and after surgery? (Fitzgerald 2000, Eitzen 2010) These effects are still relevant even 2 years later (Eitzen 2009).

To make sure you get the most out of your ACL reconstruction, make sure you get comprehensive pre and post surgery rehab from the sports physiotherapists at Melbourne Sports Physiotherapy.

Your pre-surgery rehab and post-reconstruction rehab includes:

- Reduction of swelling and pain
- Increasing your range of motion
- Strengthening
- Balance training
- Hopping, jumping and landing practice – yes! This is possible even prior to surgery if you have good rehabilitation
- Prevention of other injuries and compensations in the ankle and hip.

Do I need to have an ACL reconstruction?

This is a decision only you can make. Make an informed decision by considering what was injured, what you want, and after discussing it with health professionals such as your Orthopaedic Surgeon and Sports Physiotherapist. Some things to consider are:

1. Does your knee buckles or gives way when supporting your weight? If it does give way, especially after a period of rehabilitation, you may be more likely to benefit from surgery.
2. Consider the type of sports and activities you want to do. Surgery is more commonly recommended if you want to return to sports that involve cutting and twisting motions such as AFL, rugby league, netball, skiing and touch football (Myklebust 2005).
3. Have you also injured your meniscus? Combined meniscal tears with an ACL injury may have increased rates of knee osteoarthritis – but not necessarily more pain (Oiestad, 2010). This should be discussed with your surgeon.



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4. A recent study of active young adults with ACL injuries found that there were no significant differences between patients who had immediate reconstructive surgery followed by rehabilitation, or those patients who had rehabilitation first, then surgery up to 12 months later (Frobell 2013). This indicates that rehabilitation should be considered as a primary treatment option for these patients.

Rehab after ACLR?

A surgical reconstruction does not mean you don't have to do rehab! Rehab is essential to build up strength and coordination, and prevent re-injury.

There is no fixed time frame for rehab after surgery. Although there are very general guidelines, rehab should progress based on how well you perform in tests of strength, coordination, balance, hopping, agility and fitness (Adams 2012, Myer 2006). For the first 2-3 months, physiotherapy is

Intensive – weekly. But if you are really diligent with your program, the need for regular physio sessions is less.

It is recommended that you have at least monthly reviews for 12-18 months after your ACLR. This is especially important to keep you on track so that you meet your goals, and are not at risk of re-injury.

When can I return to sport after a reconstruction?

Every ACL reconstruction has different timeframes depending on your goals. Returning to sport should be based on when you can safely and confidently perform a whole range of tests that assess your physical abilities. In addition, you should feel confident in the knee (Thomee 2011, Arden 2011), and successfully perform drills and skills that are specific to your sport or activity. Your sports physiotherapist can use a whole series of tests so that you can track your progress, and identify where your physical performance could be improved.

Am I at risk of reinjury after an ACL reconstruction?

Unfortunately there is a small but increased risk in rupturing your repaired ACL when you return to sport. This is true for both your injured and non-injured legs (Hewett 2013). But take heart, this risk can be reduced if you stick to your rehab plan for whatever time it takes to improve your physical abilities (Manske 2012). Generally this is between 12-18 months.

Please call **03 9337 8081** to speak to our Sports Physiotherapists, Jennifer Callaghan or Tony Beecroft, for more information regarding your ACL injury, surgery and rehabilitation. You can also book online at www.melbournesportsphysiotherapy.com.au.

(Compiled by Jennifer Callaghan, April 2014)

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