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Meniscus Surgery

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Answers to common questions about meniscus tears and the two main types of surgery: trimming the torn part (meniscectomy) and repairing it.

UNDERSTANDING THE MENISCUS

1 What is the meniscus?

Each knee has two C-shaped cartilage cushions — one on the inside (medial) and one on the outside (lateral). They absorb shock and protect the cartilage on the ends of the bones.

2 Does every tear need surgery?

No. Many tears, especially wear-and-tear (degenerative) tears in knees with arthritis, do as well with physical therapy as with surgery. Surgery is most helpful when:

- The knee **locks or catches** because a piece of meniscus is flipping in the joint
- A younger or active person has a tear from an injury, especially if it can be repaired
- Pain continues despite physical therapy

3 Will my meniscus be trimmed or repaired?

It depends on where the tear is, its pattern, your age, and the quality of the tissue. Only the outer part of the meniscus has a good blood supply, so many tears cannot heal even if stitched. **We repair whenever reasonable**, because keeping the meniscus protects the knee long term. The final decision is often made during surgery, so we will discuss both recoveries beforehand.

4 What is a root tear?

A tear where the meniscus attaches to the bone. It acts as if the meniscus is missing, which quickly increases wear on the knee, so repair is usually recommended in appropriate patients.

5 Will I get arthritis?

Losing meniscus tissue increases the long-term risk of arthritis. A meniscectomy removes only the torn part. A repair keeps the meniscus, which is why it is worth the longer recovery.

YOUR SURGERY AND RECOVERY

6 What happens during surgery?

Surgery is done arthroscopically through small incisions and usually takes 30–90 minutes. Surgery is outpatient; most patients go home the same day. You will have anesthesia, and many patients also receive a nerve block to numb the area for 12–24 hours after surgery.

7 How do the recoveries compare?

	Meniscectomy (trim)	Meniscus repair
Crutches	A few days, until walking normally	4–6 weeks; partial weight on the leg for some tear types
Brace	None	Locked straight for walking, 4–6 weeks
Bending	As comfortable	Limited (usually to 90°) for 4–6 weeks
Desk work	3–5 days	1–2 weeks
Sports	About 4–6 weeks	About 4–6 months

8 When can I drive?

Not while taking narcotics. **Left knee** with an automatic car: once comfortable, often within 1–2 weeks. **Right knee:** once you can walk without crutches and brake quickly — about 1–2 weeks after a meniscectomy, or after the brace is off (4–6 weeks) after a repair.

9 What are the risks?

Complications are uncommon. They include infection, blood clots, stiffness, and — after a repair — the meniscus not healing, which may require another surgery.

Still have questions? Call our office at **469.800.7200**. After surgery, follow your post-operative instruction sheet — if anything here differs from it, the instruction sheet takes priority.