

Orthopaedics - Reconstruction of ligament

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

Guidance for Patients

Ligament reconstruction is a surgical procedure that can repair, tighten or replace a partially or completely torn ligament. A ligament is a fibrous, collagen-rich tissue that connects structures in the body. Ligaments are often found at the joints, where they connect bones with other bones. These ligaments provide stability, which helps to prevent the excessive movement or twisting that can lead to dislocation. When a ligament is damaged, usually due to extreme force, the joint can become unstable and limit movement.

When a ligament is stretched or torn, it's known as a sprain. Most sprains will repair themselves with rest, ice, compression and elevation, along with medications that can reduce pain and inflammation. However, if patients experience repeated sprains or if the ligament is completely torn and won't heal on its own, ligament reconstruction surgery may be necessary.

Almost any ligament can be reconstructed, but the most common are:

- **Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL).** During these procedures, the surgeon reconstructs the ligament that connects the thigh and the shin at the centre of the knee.
- **Posterior cruciate ligament (PCL).** In PCL reconstruction, the surgeon reconstructs the ligament that connects the thigh and shin at the back of the knee.
- **Lateral ankle ligament.** Also known as a Brostrom procedure, a lateral ankle ligament secures or tightens the ligaments on the outside of the ankle.
- **Carpometacarpal (CMC) ligament.** Arthritis can affect the CMC joint, where the thumb and the trapezium bone meet in the wrist. During this surgery, the damaged ligament is removed and replaced with a graft from the flexor tendon in the wrist.

Before having ACL surgery, you may need to wait for any swelling to go down and for the full range of movement to return to your knee. You may also need to wait until the muscles at the front of your thigh (quadriceps) and back of your thigh (hamstrings) are as strong as possible.

If you do not have the full range of movement in your knee before having surgery, your recovery will be more difficult. It's likely to take at least 3 weeks after the injury occurred for the full range of movement to return.

Before having surgery, you may be referred for physiotherapy to help you regain the full range of movement in your knee. Your physiotherapist may show you some stretches that you can do at home to help keep your leg flexible. They may also recommend low-impact exercise, such as swimming for fitness or cycling. Visit the website of charity Cycling UK for advice.

These types of activities will improve your muscle strength without placing too much weight on your knee. You should avoid any sports or activities that involve twisting, turning or jumping.

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What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic

Contact Us

In some areas, we are experiencing a significant backlog following our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are doing everything we can to reduce this backlog including putting on extra clinics and theatre lists and opening additional sites to offer these services. We have also increased the ways we can offer appointments including offering more video and telephone appointments (as well as face to face appointments where appropriate).

Please can we request that you **do not contact your GP practice about waiting times**, as they do not have access to this information.

If you have any concerns or questions please use the contact details on your hospital letter, or if you do not have a letter with these contact details please contact our [Patient Advice & Liaison teams](#).

Keep Moving

Reducing your weight and getting active are two of the most powerful things you can do for your body and for your mind. Extra weight places additional strain on your lungs and heart, making it harder for the body to cope with surgery and respond to diseases, including COVID-19

Eating a healthy diet will help you get fit and recover quicker after surgery. Being a healthy weight also reduces your risk of blood clots and wound infections afterwards.

[Visit our weight management page for details of local support available.](#)

Improve Your Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone which has caused a lot of people to think more seriously about their health. If you have decided this is the right time for you to make changes check out

www.nhs.uk/live-well and www.nhs.uk/oneyou/

They can also provide some inspiration for you and your family. The Trust has access to many resources which may help you in making healthier choices, these can be accessed [here](#).

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Good Mental Health

Mental health issues will affect 1 in 4 people at some point in their life. Although FHFT does not itself provide urgent mental health specialist services, we are keen that you can access help and support when you need it. Please visit [FHFT website](#) where you can access links to Mental Health support in the local area.

Ongoing health conditions

About 15 million people in England have an ongoing health condition.

Long-term conditions or chronic diseases are conditions for which there is currently no cure, and which are managed with drugs and other treatment, for example: diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis and hypertension (high blood pressure).

If you are living with one of these ongoing health conditions, there are many ways in which you can [look after yourself](#).