MCL Injuries

Definition
Medial Collateral Ligament (MCL) injury is an injury to the ligament on the inner part of the knee. This ligament keeps the shin bone (tibia) in place. It can be a stretch, partial tear or complete tear of the ligament.

Causes
The MCL is usually injured by pressure or stress on the outside part of the knee. A block to the outside part of the knee during football is a common way for this ligament to be injured. It is often injured at the same time as an Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) injury occurs.

Symptoms
• Knee swelling
• Locking or catching of the knee with movement
• Pain and tenderness along the inside of the joint
• Knee gives way or feels like it is going to give way when it is active or stressed in a certain way

First Aid
A healthcare provider should examine your knee. A MCL test will be done to detect looseness of the ligament. This involves bending the knee to 25 degrees and putting pressure on the outside surface of the knee. Other tests may include:
• Knee joint X-rays
• Knee MRI

Treatment includes:
• Applying ice to the area
• Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS)
• Raising the knee above heart level

You should limit physical activity until the pain and swelling go away. The healthcare provider may put you out on crutches and in a brace to protect the ligament. You may also be told not to put any weight on your knee when you walk. After a period of keeping the knee still, you will be given exercises to strengthen and stretch the knee. Physical therapy may help you regain knee and leg strength. Surgery is often not needed when only the MCL has been torn. If you need surgery, it is often done using arthroscopy, through a small surgical cut.

When to Contact a Medical Professional
Call your healthcare provider if:
• You have symptoms of a MCL injury
• You are being treated for a MCL injury and you notice increased instability in your knee, pain or swelling after they initially faded, or your injury does not get better with time
• You re-injure your knee

Call your doctor if:
• Swelling does not go down within 2 days
• You have symptoms of infection – the area becomes more red, more painful, warm or you have a fever higher than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
• The pain does not go away after several weeks

For more information, or to contact one of our Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons, email us at SportsMedicine@amitahealth.org or call us at 224.273.2416
The AMITA Health Orthopedics Institute is a national leader in musculoskeletal care, offering comprehensive and advanced care for a wide range of conditions. We are proactive about keeping you active. That is why our multi-disciplinary orthopedic teams enlist a comprehensive leading edge approach to the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries.

Our team of highly-experienced board-certified physicians, surgeons, therapists and nurses are dedicated to providing patients of all ages with a personalized treatment program that is customized for your condition, lifestyle and personal preferences.

We work hard to prevent sports-related injuries, which have become increasingly more common among athletes, especially children. AMITA Health Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons keep kids active and participating in the extracurricular activities they enjoy by delivering educational programs and support for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic care.

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