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## ACL RECONSTRUCTION

When you twist or injure your knee, you can tear a stabilizing ligament that connects your thighbone to the shinbone. An anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) unravels like a braided rope when it's torn and does not heal on its own. Fortunately, reconstruction surgery can help many people recover their full function after an ACL tear.

### ACL Tear

Ligaments are tough, non-stretchable fibers that hold your bones together. The cruciate ligaments in your knee joints crisscross to give you stability on your feet. People often tear the ACL by changing direction rapidly, slowing down from running or landing from a jump. Young people (age 15-25) who participate in basketball and other sports that require pivoting are especially vulnerable. You might hear a popping noise when your ACL tears. Your knee gives out and soon begins to hurt and swell.

Initial treatment includes rest, ice compression and elevation (RICE) plus a brace to immobilize the knee, crutches and pain relievers. Contact Dr. McAllister right away to evaluate your condition.

### Evaluation

Dr. McAllister will conduct physical tests and image your knee (with X-rays and MRI) to determine the extent of damage to your ACL. You may or may not require reconstructive surgery where Dr. McAllister replaces the damaged ACL with strong, healthy tissue taken from another area near your knee. A strip of tendon from under your kneecap (patellar tendon), hamstring tendon, or donor tendon (allograft) may be used. Dr. McAllister threads the tissue through the inside of your knee joint and secures the ends to your thighbone and shinbone.

### Outcome

Successful ACL reconstruction surgery tightens your knee and restores its stability. It also helps you avoid further injury and get back to playing sports. After ACL reconstruction, you'll need to do rehabilitation exercises to gradually return your knee to full flexibility and stability. Building strength in your thigh and calf muscles helps support the reconstructed structure. You will probably have to stay out of sports for about 6-8 months after the surgery.