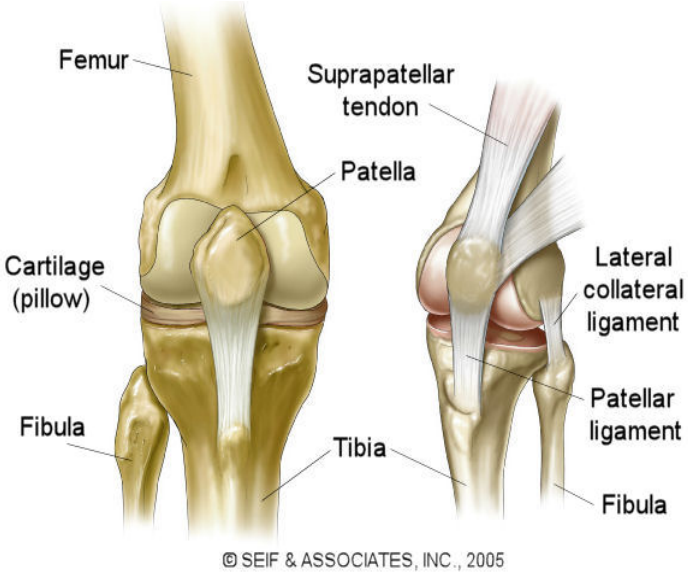
Recovery after Arthroscopy
(With Knee Ligament Injury)

You may have an internal derangement of the knee. This means something is wrong inside the knee. Your caregiver can make a more accurate *diagnosis* (learning what is wrong) by performing an *arthroscopic* procedure. Your knee has two layers of cartilage. *Articular cartilage* covers the bone ends. It lets your knee bend and move smoothly. Two *menisci* (thick pads of cartilage that form a rim inside the joint) help absorb shock. They stabilize your knee. *Ligaments* hold the bones together and support your knee joint. *Muscles* move the joint, help support your knee, and take stress off the joint itself.



ABOUT THE PROCEDURE

Arthroscopy is a surgical technique. It allows your orthopedic surgeon to diagnose and treat your knee injury with accuracy. The surgeon looks into your knee through a small scope. The scope is like a small, pencil-sized telescope. Arthroscopy is less invasive than open-knee surgery. You can expect a more rapid recovery. Following your caregiver's instructions will help you recover rapidly and completely. Use crutches, rest, elevate, ice, and do knee exercises as instructed. The length of recovery depends on various factors. These factors include type of injury, age, physical condition, medical conditions, and your compliance with your after surgery exercises.

RECOVERY

How long you will be away from your normal activities after arthroscopy will depend on the type and severity of knee problem you have. Rebuilding your muscles after arthroscopy helps ensure a full recovery.

ARTHROSCOPIC PROCEDURE WITH LIGAMENT INJURY

The repair process used and recovery time after a ligamentous injury depends on the amount of damage you have. It also depends on whether or not treatment will require reconstructive knee surgery. With a *ligament sprain*, your recovery may take six to eight weeks. A *torn ligament* needing reconstructive surgery may take 6 to 12 months to heal fully.

During arthroscopy, your surgeon may find a partial or complete tear in a *cruciate ligament.* It is usually in the *anterior* cruciate. Because of their locations, *collateral ligaments* can not be viewed arthroscopically. If your caregiver suspects an injury to a collateral ligament, open surgery may be needed. In most cases several small *incisions* (cut by the surgeon) are made. Your torn cruciate is reconstructed by grafting other tissue into the injured area. If a collateral ligament is also injured, your surgeon may staple or suture the tear through a slightly larger incision on the side of the knee.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE AND HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery area where a nurse will monitor your progress. When you are awake, stable, and taking fluids without complications, you will be allowed to go home.

Ligaments take a long time to heal. For the first several weeks, you may be instructed to limit the amount of weight you put on your leg. A removable knee immobilizer or hinged splint may be used to support your knee. You can use crutches to help you get up and around. Recovery exercises can help you regain strength and range of motion in your knee. Increased muscle strength helps support the knee. They allow faster return to normal

activities. It may take a year before you are able to return to vigorous sport activity. In the future, you may need to wear a protective brace for some stop-and-go sports.

- Once home, applying an ice pack for 15 to 20 minutes 4 times per day to your operative site may help with discomfort. Ice may also keep the swelling down.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- You may resume normal diet and activities as directed.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is increased bleeding (more than a small spot) from the incision site.
- You notice redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the incision site.
- Pus is coming from wound.
- You develop an unexplained oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- You develop increasing stiffness or pain in the knee.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU DEVELOP A RASH, HAVE DIFFICULTY BREATHING, OR HAVE ANY ALLERGIC PROBLEMS.

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