ACL RECONSTRUCTION

What is an ACL Reconstruction?

The ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) is an important stabilising ligament of the knee. It normally works to prevent the shin bone moving forward too far, and plays an important role in controlling stability of the knee during rotation or pivoting movements. ACL injuries can occur in sports, or even from fairly simple twisting episodes in normal life. They can be associated with injuries to the meniscus cartilages, the bone cartilage, or both.

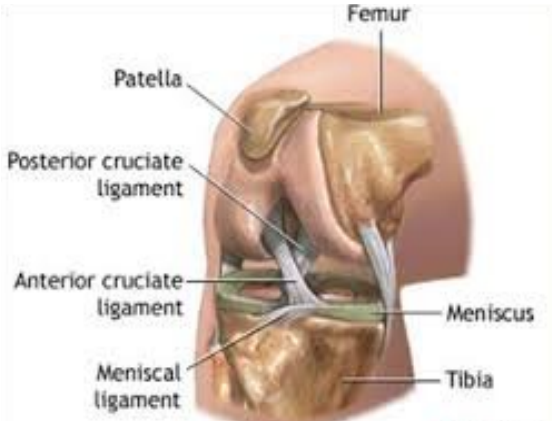
An ACL Reconstruction involves reconstruction of the 'torn' ligament with other tissue, usually with either hamstring tendon or patellar tendon.

What happens during an ACL Reconstruction?

The procedure is carried out using an arthroscope. There are approximately 3 small incisions made. The incision for obtaining the hamstring graft is just below the knee. Alternatively, if a patellar tendon graft is used, a 4 to 5cm incision is made along the front of the knee. Tunnels are then accurately sized and drilled into the Femur and Tibia and the graft inserted and fixed into position. Any other problems such as meniscus tears, or damage to the joint surface are fixed at the same time.

Preparing for an ACL Reconstruction

It is important to try and remain as active as possible in the lead up to your procedure. Read your pre-op instructions and ensure you have completed your pre-admission to the hospital at least seven days beforehand.



Have your home prepared for when you return from hospital so that your home is safer and more comfortable.

Some suggestions are:

- Arrange Furniture so that it will be easier for you to get around
- Remove throw rugs, wires, objects that may trip you and furniture that won't support you.
- Be aware of uneven floors and steps.
- Select chairs with arms and high, firm seats.
- Place objects you use frequently within easy reach and use a "carry-along" bag that can be attached to your walker or crutches.
- Consider restricting pets to one part of the house so they won't cause falls.
- Beware of bathroom and kitchen hazards; avoid wet floors; arrange things in the shower so they're easy to reach. A shower chair will also help to make showering easy.
- Prepare meals in advance and freeze them, or prepare pre cooked frozen meals.
- Organise family or friends to help with any housework, shopping, driving and providing light assistance such as dressing/showering.
- Organise crutches to leave hospital and for use for a few days following surgery.

It is normal to expect some pain and discomfort following your surgery. This will be managed appropriately to ensure you are still able to cough, breath deeply and perform your exercises.

Your leg will be wrapped in a bulky dressing and a drain may be needed. This drain will be removed and the dressing made less bulky the following day.

If you stay overnight in hospital, you may see a Physiotherapist from the hospital who will provide you with information on preventing complications, mobility advice and at home exercises. If not, you can contact your own or TPS on 1300 114 646.

It is anticipated you will go home from the hospital either the same day or the following day. Ensure you have someone to take you home and to help assist you around the house upon your return.

You will attend Dr Ramsay's clinic again 2 & 6 weeks following your procedure. These will be booked when surgery is allocated.

Rehabilitation

Physiotherapy exercises will help to bend the knee and strengthen the surrounding muscles. A gradual return to walking with your full weight is an important aspect of maintaining the muscle tone. It can take up to 12 months to make a full recovery.

The best possible outcome will involve making sure you adhere to the rehabilitation protocols. If you find your knee starts to hurt and swell, it is a good indication that your activity level has probably been a bit to high.

Please call Dr Ramsay's rooms on 3564 4000 if you experience any of the following:

- Increased Knee Pain.
- Increased redness or swelling
- Incision Drainage
- Prolonged nausea or vomiting
- Chest Pain or shortness of breath
- Tenderness in the calf or thigh of the operated leg
- A continuous or daily fever

Any concerns after hours, please present to your nearest Emergency Department or Satellite Clinic and advise them you are under Dr Ramsay.