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Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction

Introduction

Ligaments are strong bands of tissue that connect one bone to another. The ACL, one of two ligaments that cross in the middle of the knee, connects your thighbone (femur) to your shinbone (tibia) and helps stabilize your knee joint.

Most ACL injuries happen during sports and fitness activities that can put stress on the knee:

- Suddenly slowing down and changing direction (cutting)
- Pivoting with your foot firmly planted
- Landing from a jump incorrectly
- Stopping suddenly
- Receiving a direct blow to the knee or collision, such as a football tackle

When the ligament is damaged, there is usually a partial or complete tear across the tissue. A mild injury may overextend the ligament but leave it intact.

Many people hear or feel a "pop" in the knee when an ACL injury occurs. Your knee may swell, feel unstable and become too painful to bear weight.

Surgery is performed mostly to prevent instability in the knee, but also to minimize longer term arthritis in the knee.

The Operation

You will be admitted to the hospital on the morning of surgery and will be required to stay overnight. Most patients are able to go home the next day,

The operation is performed arthroscopically which means that a minimal invasive surgical approach is used with the help of a telescopic camera and micro instruments. This is done in order to minimize tissue damage and enhance rapid recovery.

During ACL reconstruction, Dr Oosthuizen removes the damaged ligament and replaces it with a segment of tendon — tissue similar to a ligament that connects muscle to bone. This replacement tissue is called a graft. The graft will serve as scaffolding on which new ligament tissue can grow.

Very often ACL injuries occur in combination with other injuries in the knee, like meniscal injuries or cartilage injuries. These injuries will be addressed during the same operation.

Possible complications

There is always risks involved with surgery, but complications during arthroscopic knee surgery are very rare in our practice. Possible surgical related problems that can occur are, infection, bleeding, blood clot formation, stiffness, and numbness over the lower leg. Re-tear of an ACL reconstruction is rare but do happen especially in athletes who continue doing contact sports.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is a slow process and full recovery takes about 12 months to be completed. In most cases you will receive a brace and crutches for the first 4 weeks. Our team of physiotherapists are trained to guide you through the rehabilitation phases up to 3 months after surgery.

I wish you a pleasant stay and a speedy recovery

