



Management of Meniscal & Articular Cartilage Injury

A group of physiotherapists & orthopaedic physicians in the US recently reviewed 88 quality journal articles (from a pool of over 7000). They then published a 50-page *clinical practice guidelines for meniscal and articular cartilage lesions*. The relevant clinical information is summarized here:

Diagnosis

While certain diagnostic findings are common with both pathologies, the consensus findings for differentiation were:

1. Meniscus:
 - Twisting type injury
 - Usually delayed effusion
 - History of catching or locking
 - Pain on overpressure of terminal flexion or extension
 - Pain or click with McMurray's test. (I find the click is common in normal knees).
 - Pain or lock/catch on Thessaly test
 - Joint line tenderness
2. Articular cartilage:
 - Acute trauma with haemarthrosis (0-2 hr)
 - Or, insidious onset, aggravated by repetitive impact.
 - Intermittent pain and swelling
 - History of catching or locking
 - Joint-line tenderness

Management

The recommended interventions relate to post-surgical management. While the interventions are similar, the time-frame for recovery post-articular

cartilage injury/surgery will often be considerably longer:

1. Meniscus:
 - Progressive active and passive knee ROM
 - Progressive weight-bearing
 - Early progressive return to activity
 - Supervised rehabilitation
 - Therapeutic exercises
 - Restoration of ROM
 - Progressive strength training of knee and hip
 - Neuromuscular training (beneficial in both surgical and non-surgical cases).
 - Neuromuscular stimulation / biofeedback to assist early return of muscle function.
2. Articular cartilage
 - Progressive active and passive knee ROM
 - Progressive weight-bearing
 - Progressive return to activity – may be delayed depending on type of surgery.
 - Therapeutic exercises:
 - Progressive ROM
 - Progressive strengthening of knee and hip
 - Neuromuscular training
 - Neuromuscular stimulation / biofeedback.

References:

1. Logerstedt, D et al (2018). Knee pain & mobility impairments: meniscal & articular cartilage lesions revision 2018. *JOSPT*, 48,
2. Knee pain & mobility impairments: meniscal & articular cartilage lesions revision 2018. Using the evidence to guide physical therapy practice. *JOSPT*, 48, 2, 123-124.



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