

& Joint News

Bone

TRI RIVERS SURGICAL ASSOCIATES

SPRING 2003

Twist & SHOUT!

Chances are you've experienced it before — that sudden, awkward moment when you lose your balance, stumble clumsily and sprain your ankle. Moments like this happen to 27,000 Americans each day, making ankle sprains a top orthopedic complaint and the most common sports injury.



"A sprain results when the ankle turns sharply inward or outward, causing one or more of the elastic ligaments that connect the bones to stretch or tear. Planting your foot wrong while taking a step or playing a sport may cause a sprain," said F.X. Plunkett, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates.

Sometimes a sprain is mild, the pain quickly fades, and you go about your day as usual. A more severe sprain can be painful and incapacitating. You may not be able to move the ankle or bear weight on it. The joint may swell or turn black and blue, and bruising may extend into the foot or leg. Depending on the severity of the sprain, healing time may vary from a few weeks to several months.

"An ankle sprain should be evaluated by a physician," Dr. Plunkett said. "If it is not treated properly, long-term

problems could result, including repetitive sprains, which may require surgical repair of the ligaments. In addition, suspected sprains in children should always be evaluated to rule out a growth plate injury."

Your physician will examine the joint and ask you what you were doing at the time of injury. He or she may also order X-rays to evaluate the possibility of a broken bone. Treatment depends on the severity of the injury.

"Fortunately, most ankle sprains can be treated conservatively. Your doctor may prescribe rest; anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen; ice therapy; and the use of a brace, bandage or crutches," Dr. Plunkett said.

According to Dr. Plunkett, after an initial period of resting the joint to reduce swelling and heal the ligaments, it is important to gradually resume weight bearing on the ankle. Physical therapy or an at-home exercise program may also be prescribed to help restore the ankle's strength, flexibility and range of motion. Once the joint is strong enough, you can slowly resume activities as allowed by your physician.

Ankle sprains are a common orthopedic concern.

Scoping out the knee

Arthroscopic surgery gives an inside view of common conditions

Did you know that the knee is the largest joint in the body and one of the most easily injured? When a knee injury occurs, orthopedic specialists often turn to a procedure known as arthroscopy for proper diagnosis and treatment.

"Arthroscopic surgery allows the surgeon to diagnose and treat knee disorders by providing a clear view of the inside of the knee," said Thomas S. Muzzonigro, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon at Tri Rivers Surgical Associates. "During the procedure, the physician inserts tiny operating instruments and a video camera into the joint through a few small incisions in the skin. The camera allows your doctor to examine the source of injury and view his work on a monitor while he uses the instruments to remove or repair damaged tissue."

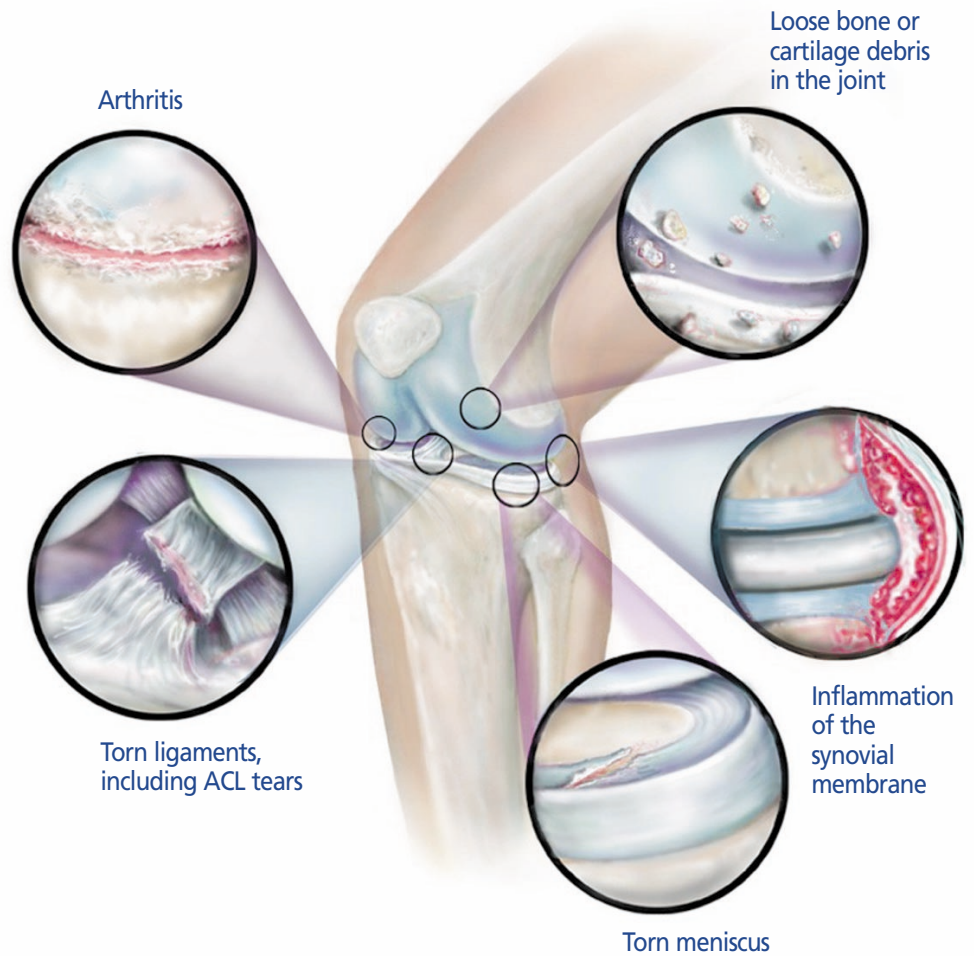
Modern arthroscopy was first performed in the late 1960s, and today it is one of the most common orthopedic procedures in the United States. In fact, more than 1.5 million "scopes" are performed each year.

"Knee arthroscopy was a significant advancement in orthopedic care because it allowed surgeons to view the inside of the joint and diagnose and treat a variety of conditions without performing major surgery," he said.

According to Dr. Muzzonigro, sports and work injuries, arthritis, and general wear and tear from aging can affect knee function and may require arthroscopic surgery.

Usually performed as an outpatient procedure, arthroscopy causes less trauma to the muscles, ligaments and other tissues than more invasive surgeries. Recovery time is usually less than that for open, or traditional, surgery.

Conditions that may be diagnosed and treated arthroscopically include:



Get the Scoop on Total Joint Replacement

Watch for upcoming total joint classes in your community

For many people, the thought of total joint replacement brings to mind images of independence and a return to a more active lifestyle. Others, however, are reluctant to undergo the procedure because they have uncertainties regarding post-surgical recovery.

"Our goal is to use community education classes to provide a realistic picture of what patients can expect from this type of surgery," said Michael W. Weiss, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates.

The total joint replacement classes feature presentations by the professionals responsible for your care. Time is allotted for questions during an informal discussion period so that patients may gain a better understanding of what to expect prior to surgery, during their hospital stay, and while recovering at home.

For more information on upcoming total joint replacement classes, call Tri Rivers Surgical Associates at 1-866-874-7483 or visit our web site at www.tririversortho.com.



When Good Knees Go Bad

Joint fluid therapy may be worth a shot.

Your knee may be sore, stiff and swollen from arthritis, but that's no reason to give up on it just yet.

A newer treatment for osteoarthritis of the knee may provide you with months of symptom relief while also delaying the need for surgery to replace the damaged joint.

Called joint fluid therapy, this conservative treatment involves injecting hyaluronic acid — a substance similar to your own joint fluid — into the affected knee. There, the hyaluronic acid helps to reduce friction from roughened cartilage and cushion the painful joint.

"We find that joint fluid therapy may be effective for patients with mild to moderate osteoarthritis whose symptoms don't respond to other non-surgical measures, such as medications and exercise to strengthen supporting muscles," said William D. Abraham, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical. "A benefit of this treatment is that patients may be able to wait to have surgery. They can possibly keep their own knees a little longer."

Patients undergoing joint fluid therapy receive a series of three to five knee injections over a period of as many weeks. Each successive injection delivering a small amount of hyaluronic acid into the joint space, where the fluid is thought to act as a lubricant to keep the knee moving freely and with less pain.

Many people report symptom relief within seven to 14 days of the first injection. The positive effects typically peak five to nine weeks after the last injection and may last for up to a year. Treatment can be repeated every 12 months for as long as the patient derives some benefit.

"As with other conservative treatments, joint fluid therapy does not stop arthritis from advancing," said Dr. Abraham, who is fellowship trained in total joint replacement surgery. "It does not replace damaged

cartilage or repair an arthritic knee. What it can do is possibly buy us some time, in that we may delay the need for total joint replacement in some patients by controlling pain and other symptoms."

Total joint replacement involves removing the affected joint and replacing it with a prosthesis made of durable metals and plastics. It is the only treatment for osteoarthritis — also known as wear-and-tear arthritis — that eliminates the damaged cartilage.

"Knee replacement is highly successful surgery, and patients are usually very happy with the results," Dr. Abraham said. "But it also has an involved recovery and carries some risk, like all surgeries do. For these reasons, we try to manage symptoms conservatively for as long as we can. Joint fluid therapy offers patients one more conservative option."

ASK THE DOCTOR

I recently had a total joint replacement.

Why is it necessary to take an antibiotic before going to the dentist?

According to D. Kelly Agnew, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates, following total joint replacement, patients typically experience dramatic reduction in pain and stiffness, and often can do things they haven't done in years. Enjoying these benefits will require one minor lifestyle change.

"You must inform your dentist and other physicians that you have had total joint replacement. You will be given antibiotics prior to and after dental work and some other doctor visits to minimize your risk of infection," Dr. Agnew said.

"The most common causes of infection are from bacteria that enter the bloodstream during dental procedures, urinary tract infection, skin infection or from an ingrown toenail. Once bacteria enter the bloodstream, they can settle around the replaced joint and cause infection if prophylactic antibiotics are not administered," he said.

In addition to dental cleanings, you may require preventive antibiotics before undergoing bronchoscopy, liver biopsy, gastroenterologic procedures, urinary tract endoscopy, tonsillectomy and other surgery.

"Although you may have to take extra precaution to prevent infection, you should not avoid undergoing these procedures. By taking prophylactic antibiotics, the risk of developing an infection is very minimal," Dr. Agnew said.

Contact your physician at any time if you experience symptoms of a possible joint infection. These may include persistent fever; shaking chills; increased redness, tenderness or swelling around the joint; drainage from the surgical wound; and increased joint pain during periods of both activity and rest.

When to see your doctor for joint pain.

Almost everyone experiences mild, temporary pain in one or more joints. But if your joint pain goes beyond either mild or temporary, it may be a symptom of osteoarthritis, a condition that occurs when the smooth cartilage lining on the inside of your joint begins to wear away.

You should see your doctor when joint pain, swelling and/or stiffness:

- Occurs even when you're not involved in an activity
- Cannot be relieved by rest or reduced by over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin or ibuprofen
- Interferes with your ability to perform many activities, such as climbing stairs, bending over or grasping objects
- Awakens you from sleep

Your doctor has a variety of treatment options available to help manage your symptoms.

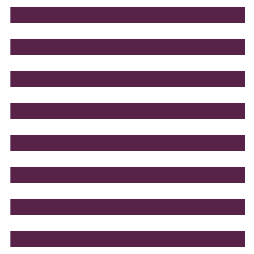
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