



THUNDER BASIN ORTHOPAEDICS
— AND SPORTS MEDICINE —

ACL Reconstruction

What is an ACL tear?

The ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) is one of the main stabilizing ligaments in the knee joint. It is a strong ligament inside your knee that allows you to be able to run, cut, twist, and pivot. Most ACL injuries occur when an individual makes a sudden cut or turn and the foot stays planted on the ground. There may be other structures that are injured in conjunction with an ACL tear, including the meniscus and other ligaments. Signs and symptoms include: immediate swelling, pain, and instability of the knee joint. The treatment plan is formed based on what structures are involved, the patients current activity level, and patients desired activity level.

Surgical Techniques:

The ligament typically needs to be reconstructed by another piece of tissue (graft). The graft choice will be discussed in detail with you and your surgeon. Autograft means your own tissue and typically a portion of your patellar tendon or hamstring tendons. Allograft tissue comes from a donor. Based on scientific review, autograft choice does not influence outcome. Rather, the accurate placement by surgeons, stable initial fixation of the graft, patient compliance, and rehabilitation all optimize the results. Your surgeon uses an arthroscope (camera) to perform your surgery.

Pre-Operative Care:

- Preoperative goal: return to walking normally, decrease swelling in the knee, and having near normal range of motion prior to surgery
- “Pre-hab”: you may be instructed by your orthopedic provider to have an evaluation with a physical therapist prior to your surgery. The intention of pre-hab is to build up your strength and maintain normal motion. This will greatly help your recovery process after surgery.

- Medical clearance: this will be determined by your surgeon depending on your age and medical history. You may need routine blood work, tests, and/or an evaluation by your primary care provider depending on your age and medical history.
- Medications: stop taking all anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) and OTC herbal supplements/vitamins 2 weeks prior to your surgery. These medications thin your blood and make it difficult for your surgeon to perform the surgery. All other medications will be reviewed by the surgical facility.

Post-Operative Care:

- Pain medication: you will typically be given a prescription anti-inflammatory medication for your baseline pain medication. You may also be given a stronger pain medication to take for breakthrough pain that the anti-inflammatory pain medication does not control.
 - Our goal at Thunder Basin Orthopaedics is to make you comfortable, but we do not expect you to be pain free.
- Dressing: leave bandage on for 72 hours after surgery, then may remove bandage and shower as normal. No soaking of the incision for 3 weeks after surgery. Leave steri-strips in place until they come off on their own.
- Ice: you may be given a cryocuff ice machine after surgery. Icing is very important to decrease swelling and pain after surgery. Leave ice on for 20 minutes at a time, and ice several times a day for the first week after surgery.
- Weight bearing: most patients are able to bear weight as tolerated and crutches are typically not required after surgery. Some patients use crutches for their comfort for a few days following surgery. If your procedure requires weight bearing restrictions, your surgeon will inform you of this.
- Physical therapy: you will begin physical therapy within a couple of days after surgery and got to physical therapy 2-3 times/week. Your rehab process will take several months before your surgeon will clear you to return to play.

Please refer to our attached frequently asked questions list. If your question has not been answered, please call Thunder Basin Orthopaedics at (307) 682-6222 – Gillette or (307) 358-6200 – Douglas.

Please call us at the above number if you experience severe pain that is not relieved by your medicine or if you experience a temperature over 101 degrees F, redness/swelling in your thigh or calf.

