

Collateral Ligament Surgery — Pre-Operative Patient Guide

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Isolated MCL or LCL / Posterolateral Corner Tear — Repair or Reconstruction

Your Condition & Procedure

The condition

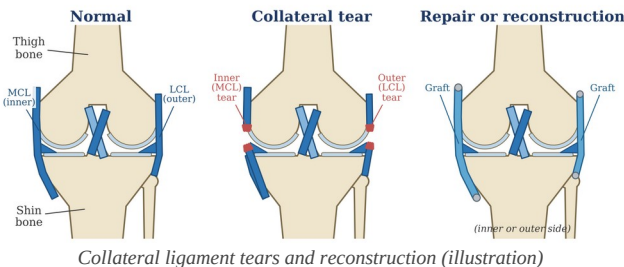
The **collateral ligaments** run along the inner side of the knee (**MCL**) and the outer side (**LCL** and **posterolateral corner**), keeping it from bending sideways and twisting. Severe or long-standing tears that do not heal can leave the knee unstable with walking, turning, and sports.

The surgery

Through an incision on the inner (MCL) or outer (LCL) side of the knee (typically outpatient), the torn ligament is repaired to bone or rebuilt with a cadaver tendon graft in small bone tunnels. The joint may be checked with a camera, and meniscus or cartilage damage treated. The final plan is determined during surgery.

Risks & benefits

Benefits: Most patients regain a stable knee and return to their activities. **Risks** are uncommon and include infection, blood clots, remaining looseness or graft stretching, injury to the nerve that lifts the foot (outer-side surgery), injury to nearby structures (such as nerves, blood vessels, or cartilage), stiffness, persistent pain, and the need for further surgery. These will be reviewed with you in detail before surgery.



Collateral ligament tears and reconstruction (illustration)

Before Surgery

- **Medications:** We will tell you what to stop and when (e.g., blood thinners, anti-inflammatories, some supplements, weight-loss injections).
- **Fasting:** Follow the instructions from your surgery coordinator/facility. In general, you should have nothing to eat or drink starting at midnight the night before surgery.
- **Nicotine:** Stop all nicotine products—they slow healing.
- **Equipment:** A hinged knee brace and crutches are typically arranged beforehand. Practice with crutches.
- **Physical therapy:** Schedule your first visit for within about a week after surgery.
- **Home:** Plan for a helper and remove trip hazards; a shower chair can help.
- **Medical history:** Let us know if you or anyone in your family has a history of blood clot disorders or a malignant hyperthermia reaction to anesthesia.
- **Health:** Call us if you develop a fever, illness, or skin problem near the knee.

Day of Surgery

- If instructed, take blood pressure/heart medications with a small sip of water.
- Arrive at the time given by your surgery coordinator.
- Bring your medication list, insurance card, photo ID, and brace/crutches if you have them.
- Wear loose clothing; leave jewelry and valuables at home.
- A responsible adult must drive you home. You may **not** drive yourself.

Immediately After Surgery

- You will recover in the recovery area; most patients go home the same day.
- Your surgeon will discuss the procedure with you and your support person.
- Your care team will review wound care, restrictions, medications, follow-up, and warning signs before discharge.

Milestone	What to Expect After Surgery (General Timeline)
Weight-bearing	Touch-down weight (foot flat, ~20 lb) with crutches for 6 weeks (inner-side surgery may add half weight from 4 weeks), then full weight over 1–2 weeks; normal walking by ~8 weeks.
Brace & motion	Hinged brace locked straight for walking and sleep for 6 weeks. Bending to 90° by 2 weeks and 120° by 6 weeks. An activity brace is worn until 4 months.
Daily life	Desk work often within 2 weeks. Side-to-side and twisting stress on the knee is avoided until 16 weeks. No driving while taking narcotic pain medication.
Running	Typically from 16 weeks, once strength and motion allow.
Sports	Straight-line agility at ~20 weeks and cutting at ~24 weeks; full return typically at 6 months, after strength and hop testing.
► Please note: This is a general guide only. Detailed post-operative instructions will be provided on the day of surgery, and your restrictions and timeline may change based on the findings and procedures performed.	

Learn More

We **strongly recommend** reading these pages from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (OrthoInfo) before your surgery:

- **Your condition: Collateral Ligament Injuries** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/diseases--conditions/collateral-ligament-injuries/>
- **Related reading: Combined Knee Ligament Injuries** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/diseases--conditions/combined-knee-ligament-injuries/>

Video: You may find a video demonstrating an example (not the exact technique) of your surgery at

<https://patient.orthopedica.com/student/activity/2205962-medial-mcl-and-lateral-lcl-collateral-ligament-tears> (or browse <https://patient.orthopedica.com/student/catalog>).

Questions before surgery? Call our office at (972) 378-1438. For a medical emergency, call 911.