

ACL: Before Your Operation



Information for Patients

This leaflet has been written to give you the right information about ACL injuries and what you can do to help with your recovery.

What is ACL and what does it do?

The anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) is one of a number of ligaments inside your knee. Its main job is to connect your femur (thigh) to your tibia (shin). It is an extremely strong ligament and works to help stabilise and support your knee with twisting movements and forwards movement of the shin.

How does it get injured?

Injuring an ACL is not an easy thing to do as it is very strong. If you are unfortunate enough to have injured your ACL, it is normally down to a combination of movements coming together, and a force being applied to the knee that will put stress on the ligament and may injure it. As we've said, it is not easy to injure your ACL and most injuries are associated with sports like football, rugby or skiing.

Can an ACL recover by itself?

This is debatable but for most people, an injured ACL will not heal by itself, however it doesn't mean you can't have a functioning knee without an ACL.

Can I improve my knee without surgery?

It is not essential for you to undergo surgery to improve your knee. By working hard on your leg strength with the support of a physiotherapist, you can find that your symptoms can improve. However, if you are looking to return to sport or a job that requires you to move fast, turn or react quickly, it is likely that you may have to consider surgery if the strengthening doesn't help enough.

What can I do to help myself?

If you've chosen to have surgery or not, trying to ensure that your muscles are strong and in the best condition they can be before your surgery is normally associated with better outcomes afterwards. The main focus of any exercise programme before you undergo an

anterior cruciate ligament repair should be on regaining as much leg strength as possible, especially in your quadriceps (front of your thigh).

How long should I keep doing these exercises?

If you are planning to have surgery, you need to continue these exercises (or other ones if you want to), all the way up to your operation to make sure you and your leg are in the best condition.

Where can I find more information?

If you would like to know more about ACL injuries and surgery and also find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

Search online: [Norfolk and Waveney MSK services 'ACL'](#)

Exercises



Place a chair behind you. Hold onto a set of weights or use a heavy backpack and slowly lower your bottom down to the chair, briefly touch your bottom to the chair (do not sit down) and rise up.

Repeat 8-12 times for 3-4 sets. Make sure you take no longer than about 1 minute's rest in between each set. Complete every other day.



Lying on the bed or floor. Place a weight on your stomach. Lift your bottom off the bed/ floor and slowly lower. To increase this challenge, try completing this using just one leg.

Repeat 8-12 times for 3-4 sets. Make sure you take no longer than about 1 minute's rest in between each set. Complete every other day.



If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio, Braille or in a different language, please contact us on **01502 445447**.

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