

# Anterior Cruciate Ligament

## Understanding How the Knee Works

The two main bones of the knee, the femur and the tibia, meet up to form the hinge joint of the knee. These bones are supported by a network of cartilage, ligaments and muscle that allow the knee to bend and support the weight of the body.

## What Is The ACL?

The ACL, or anterior cruciate ligament, is part of a series of ligaments that hold the two bones of the knee together, forming the joint. This particular ligament is one of the most frequently injured ligaments of the knee.

## How Does An ACL Injury Occur?

A tear or rupture of the ACL is an extremely common sports injury and is seen in both professional and recreational athletes. ACL injuries can occur when the foot is firmly planted and the knee is pivoted beyond its normal range. An ACL injury can also occur when awkwardly landed on, such as in sidestepping, or jumping from a height. An ACL tear or rupture is generally recognized as a "popping" sensation within the knee, followed by pain, swelling and instability of the knee. Some experience loss of full range of motion and instability when walking.

## How is an ACL Injury Diagnosed?

If an ACL tear is suspected by one of the physicians at Arizona Bone and Joint Specialists, diagnostic imaging such as an x-ray or MRI may be ordered to confirm their diagnosis. A physical examination of the knee will also be performed to rule out other possible diagnoses.

## What Are The Treatment Options For ACL Injuries?

Treatment options for ACL injuries depend on the severity of the injury. Non surgical, conservative treatments include bracing, physical therapy, and oral anti-inflammatory medications. Surgical treatment of an ACL injury includes arthroscopic surgical reconstruction. Rather than a full open surgery, arthroscopic surgery requires smaller incisions and a shorter recovery time.

## What can I expect after ACL injury treatment?

Physical therapy is extremely important after ACL treatment to help the knee rebuild its prior strength. Successful ACL surgery is highly dependent on the patient's

dedication to physical therapy and rehabilitation. The goals of physical therapy and rehabilitation will be to reduce swelling, regain full range of motion, maintaining mobility of the kneecap, and strengthening of the knee's supporting muscles to avoid re-injury.

