

Things to look out for



This education leaflet is designed to give you a brief and basic overview of signs and symptoms to look out for following anterior cruciate ligament reconstructive surgery. Every patient, injury and surgeon is different therefore please consult your health professional for further individual detail.

Further information related to this topic can be found at:
semrc.blogs.latrobe.edu.au

Many people experience new symptoms and change in function of their knee, and it is important to know that this is normal and common after ACL reconstructive surgery.



Future symptoms – am I at risk?

Some people experience changes in symptoms and function in the early years following their surgery, where as others it occurs much later and others not at all. It is poorly understood what puts people into these categories. And it is likely that a large variety of factors play a part in the development of symptoms.



Key things to watch for

- New or change in pain, swelling or stiffness (at rest, during or after activity)
- Giving way
- People stating you are limping whilst walking
- Altered muscle strength or weakness

What is osteoarthritis? Will I get it?

Knee osteoarthritis (OA) is a common musculoskeletal condition with incidence increasing with age.

Isn't it just a normal part of ageing?

Now that you have had an ACL injury and surgery your knee is at greater risk of osteoarthritis (OA) development at an earlier age

Does surgery reduce my risk of OA?

No, it restores the stability of the knee joint but it does not reduce the risk of OA.



Further information



Website/Blog

semrc.blogs.latrobe.edu.au/category/acl



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OSTEOARTHRITIS – General Population

Knee OA (on X-ray)

1% aged between 25 - 34 years
15 – 30% aged 55 years
50% aged > 75 years

- Cartilage begins to thin
- Small bone spurs/cysts
- Space between joint becomes smaller



Knee pain/symptoms

<1% aged 25 - 34 years
20% aged 55 years
25% aged > 75 years

- Pain,
- Stiffness,
- Swelling,
- Loss of strength/function



THESE DO NOT ALWAYS MATCH UP

I.e. you can have degenerative changes on X-ray but NO symptoms or vice

OSTEOARTHRITIS – Following ACL Reconstruction

OA after ACL reconstruction is common and NOT always associated with symptoms

- 1 year following ACL reconstruction: 5% (I.e. aged 18 – 40)
- 15 years following ACL reconstruction: 50% (I.e. aged 35 – 60)

What can I do about it?

- **Graded exercises and return to activity** following injury is important to ensure the knee joint is gradually loaded.
- Progression based on **achieving strength/functional goals** not a time point
- Continue **seeing health care professional** until all deficits are restored
- Keep strong and maintain good function
- **Healthy diet and weight** (seek professional help if unsure)

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