

Soft Tissue Knee Injury

This leaflet provides information about a soft tissue injury of the knee. If you have access to the internet, you can access our self-help app for knee problems. Details on how to do this are at the bottom of the leaflet. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a health care professional.

- Soft tissues are the structures which help maintain normal movement, stability and function in joints. In the knee, they include the muscles, tendons, meniscus and ligaments. Please see figure 1.
- These structures may become injured following trauma or might develop over time.
- Most soft tissue injuries will fully recover within three months but sometimes symptoms can take several months to improve.

Figure 1.

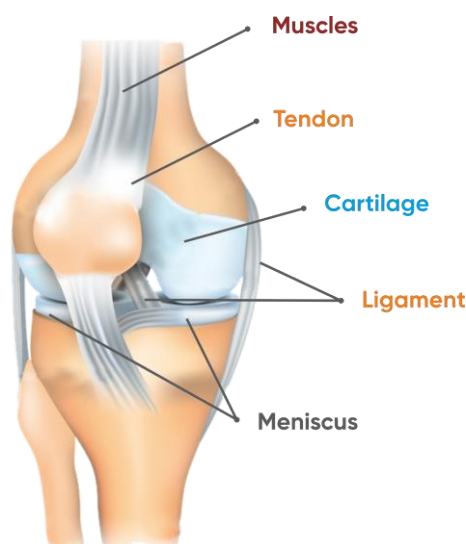


Image Source: [Knee Anatomy | Sahaj Therapy | Knee Treatment in Indore](#)

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Pain
- Swelling and / or bruising
- Reduced range of movement
- Difficulty weight bearing.
- Giving way or the feeling your knee is unstable.

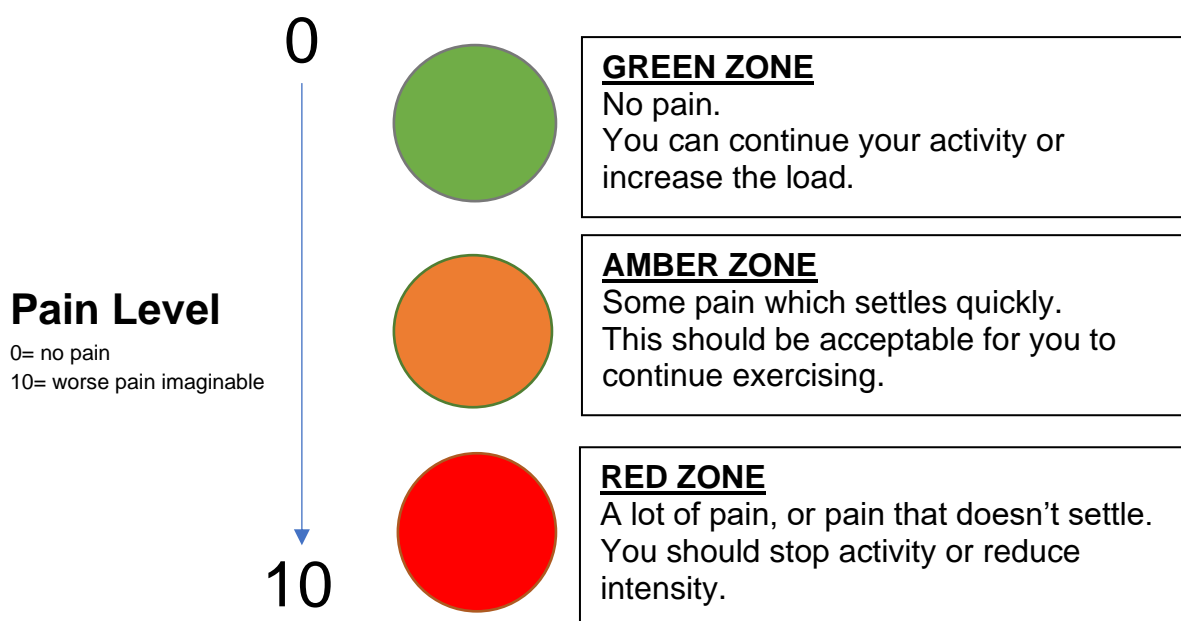
How is it diagnosed?

- Most soft tissue injuries are diagnosed using your description of the injury, your symptoms and an examination of your knee.
- Sometimes further tests are required such as x-rays and scans.

How is it managed?

Unless you have been given specific instructions about how to manage your injury, most soft tissue injuries are treated similarly in the initial stages.

- **Protection / activity modification:** You may need to reduce your normal physical activity levels. However, try to keep the knee moving as much as possible in a tolerable pain range. You may be provided with crutches or a brace to help with this. Use the traffic light system below to help. You should not exercise in the red zone.



- **Ice:** An ice pack or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel can give short term pain relief. Apply to the sore area for up to five to 10 minutes, every two hours. *Ensure ice is not in direct contact with skin.*
- **Elevation:** When you are resting, try to support the injured leg in a raised position to help with swelling management.
- **Pain relief:** Painkillers that you can buy over the counter are often the most effective in relieving knee pain and these can help you get moving again. Speak to your physiotherapist, GP or a pharmacist about which medication is appropriate for you.
- **Movement:** When you feel able to, gentle movement and exercise will encourage healing and improve the movement in your knee. Please see below how to pace yourself when starting to exercise again.

Exercises

Stage 1

You may experience an initial increase in pain with these exercises. However, this can be a normal part of rehabilitation. If your pain gets too much, do fewer repetitions and gradually build them up as you feel able to.

1. Knee extension

Lie or sit with the foot of your affected leg on some pillows. Make sure there is a gap between your leg and the bed and try to straighten the knee as much as you can. Imagine you are “pushing” the back of your knee down towards bed. Try to use your quadriceps muscles more than your bottom.



2. Knee flexion

Lie on your back with your legs straight. Slide your affected foot towards your bottom by bending your hip and knee until a point that feels comfortable. Then slowly lower back to the start position. Relax and repeat.



1. Balance

Stand on your affected leg near a firm object using support to gain balance. When ready, let go of the support and attempt to keep your balance. Use the support to regain your balance if needed.



Stage 2

When you feel able to progress your exercises, try some of the below:

1. Sit to stand

Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Without using your hands, stand up, then slowly sit back down and repeat.



2. Glute bridge

Lie on your back. Bend both knees and place your feet flat on the bed. Lift your buttocks from the bed. Place your buttocks back on the bed. Repeat this exercise and remember to continue to breathe properly.



3. Step up

Stand in front of a stair or step holding onto something if needed. Place your effected leg onto the step and bring up the other foot. Keeping your effected leg on the step, slowly step down with the other foot aiming to control this movement.



4. Single leg balance with eyes closed

Stand on your affected leg near a firm object using support to gain balance. When ready, let go of the support and attempt to keep your balance with your eyes shut. Use the support to regain your balance if needed. You can also stand on a pillow to make harder.



When to seek further assessment

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, please discuss them with your GP or First Contact Practitioner (FCP):

- Giving way of the knee joint that is not improving.
- Locking of the knee joint.
- Unexplained heat or swelling in the knee joint.

Is there anything other than exercise?

- **Injection Therapy:** In some cases, a corticosteroid injection may be considered in addition to physiotherapy. More information on injections can be found in our injection therapy leaflet.
- **Psychological support:** Having an injury can be very frustrating and it is normal to feel worried about pain. We now know that stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue can cause an increased experience of pain severity and make recovery more difficult. It is important to speak to a health professional about psychological support if you need help.
- **Fit note for work:** If your injury is preventing you from completing activities required for work, please discuss this with a healthcare professional.

- **Self-management tools:** If you have access to the internet and / or a smartphone we recommend using the getUBetter app ([getUBetter - Request Access](#)). It provides tailored support and advice for your symptoms. Please use the QR code below to access. Alternatively, it can be accessed by your GP practice if you live in southwest London. You can also access physiotherapy in the app, should your symptoms not improve. If you don't have access to the internet or a smartphone, please contact your GP practice for advice.



Other useful sources of information

NHS

[Knee pain - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MSK Physiotherapy team on 020 8725 0007 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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