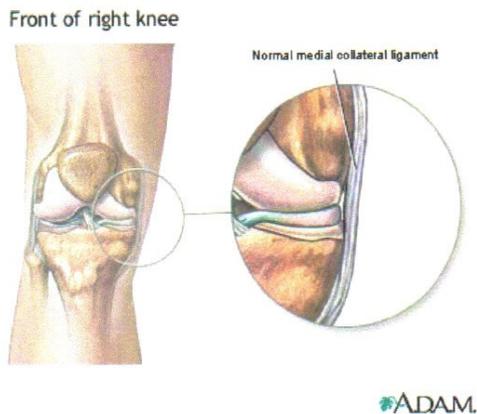


## Medial Collateral Ligament Tear

The knee is a complex joint formed by a combination of bones, tendons, ligaments, muscles, and cartilage. The medial collateral ligament (MCL) is one of four major ligaments in the knee connecting the bones of the upper and lower leg. It is a strong band of tissue on the inside part of the knee. The MCL's role is to provide stability and limit excessive outward movement in the knee. Due to the MCL's location and size, it is typically put under more stress than other ligaments and is one of the most commonly injured ligaments within the knee. The figure below depicts the anatomy of the knee and includes the MCL.



### Causes of Medial Collateral Ligament Injuries

- A direct blow to the knee or lower leg, especially when the knee is bent and the lower leg is forced inward
- During contact sports like football, injuries may occur from tackles
- MCL injuries occur frequently in skiers

### Diagnosis

- The initial diagnosis of the injured knee may be made difficult because of the significant pain, swelling and possible spasms around the joint.
- X-rays can be done to rule out fractures.
- An MRI may be performed to rule out other ligament or cartilage involvement.
- A physical exam is usually sufficient to provide a diagnosis. MCL sprains are classified by physical exam into three grades:
  - Grade I Sprain: Ligament stretch, pain along ligament
  - Grade II Sprain: Partial tear, mildly decreases stability
  - Grade III Sprain: Complete tear, significantly abnormal stability.

### Non-surgical Treatment

- Rest
- Ice
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Physical therapy

### How will physical therapy help?

With a MCL sprain or tear, the goals of physical therapy are to reduce swelling, decrease pain, restore normal range of motion and strength in the knee joint, and return the patient to their previous functional capacity. Below are two examples of knee exercises:

