

# ASK AN EXPERT

DR. RONAK PATEL, ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON

## Is it possible to repair a torn meniscus?

It's a pop heard around the world each and every day. A person is walking up stairs, enjoying a hike or playing a game of pickup basketball when they feel something snap behind their knee — the tell-tale sign of a torn meniscus.

"I've heard the story a hundred times," said Dr. Ronak Patel, a sports medicine specialist and orthopaedic surgeon with Hinsdale Orthopaedic Associates.

A tear in the meniscus — a thin, fibrous cartilage between the surfaces of the knee joint — can be a life-changing injury, especially if that tear occurs in what Patel calls the "root." That's the spot where the meniscus meets the knee bone.

For decades the standard treatment for such injuries was removal of the meniscus. Sometimes referred to as the "shock absorber" of the knee joint, removal was a prescription

for future arthritis and often, knee replacement.

Patel said arthritis can set in within months of meniscus removal. But a relatively new tool known as the NovoStitch Plus by Ceterix allows Patel to perform arthroscopic medial meniscus root repair in a half-hour, minimally invasive surgery that not only saves the meniscus, it also saves the patient from future pain and surgeries.

The device allows Patel to install sutures in an area of the knee that was once too tiny for surgeons to access.

Patel said patients are put under a light general anesthesia, return home the same day and typically spend four to six weeks on crutches as they recover from the procedure.

"The goal is to preserve the joint and prevent arthritis," said Patel, who is one of only a few area surgeons specially trained to perform the surgery.

"We've really developed a niche in this area," said Patel, who also is medical director for the American Knee Institute.

He said that focusing on the

knee joint has allowed him to become an expert on the joint and on procedures to preserve it. Other physicians now send their patients to him for this and other complex knee procedures, Patel said.

Patients who undergo knee replacement often find their activities are limited after surgery. Runners can no longer run, skiers can no longer ski and basketball is off the table for someone with a new knee, Patel said.

Arthroscopic medial meniscus root repair allows most patients to eventually return to their previous level of activity.

Even more exciting, Patel said, is the fact that no one who has received the arthroscopic repair has had to return for knee replacement.

Before coming to Hinsdale Orthopaedics, Patel worked with members of the Cleveland Cavaliers, Browns and Indians. After coming to Chicago, he worked with the Chicago Cubs and Black Hawks.

"I treat them all the same," he said.

— by Sandy Illian Bosch



Whether Dr. Ronak Patel's patient is a professional athlete or someone who enjoys an occasional game of pickup basketball, the goal of a specialized procedure he performs is the same — a lifetime free of knee arthritis and knee replacement surgery. (photo provided)



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