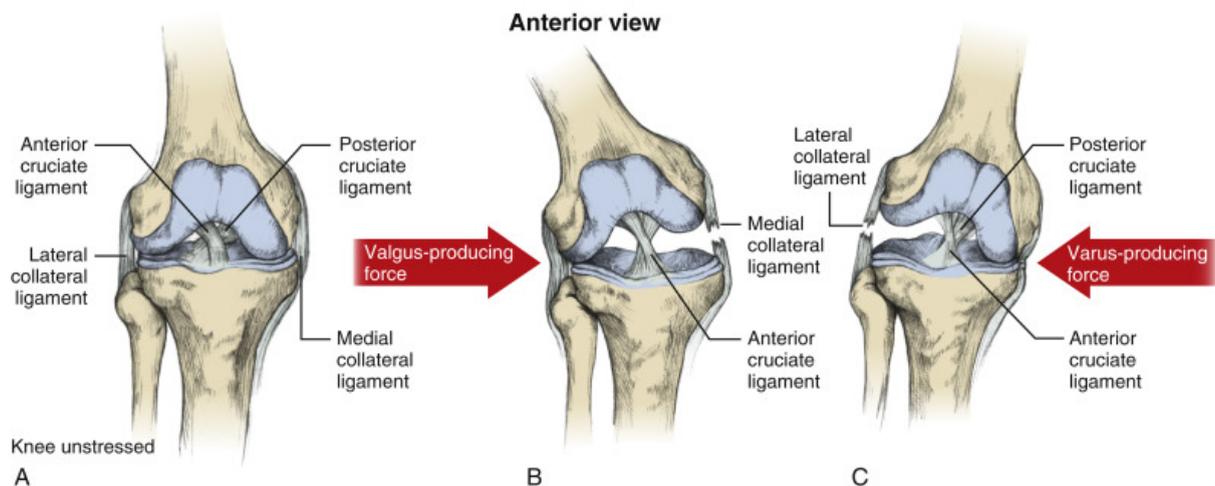


# How to treat an LCL injury



OVENS VALLEY  
PHYSIO & PILATES

- A Lateral Collateral Ligament (LCL) injury occurs when the joint is **stretched past its normal range of movement** causing damage to the ligament
- Usually an varus mechanism occurs where the knee collapses outwards
- An LCL injury can occur in isolation or in combination with other knee injuries such as; an ACL tear, MCL tear, PCL tear, PLC tear, meniscus tear, bone bruising and bone fracture.
- Most LCL injuries are usually contact injuries which makes them hard to prevent



## How bad is my LCL injury?

Ligament injuries are graded on a scale from 1-3:

- **Grade 1** represents a microscopic injury without stretching of the ligament on a macroscopic level.
- **Grade 2** has macroscopic stretching, but the ligament remains intact.
- **Grade 3** is a complete rupture of the ligament.

This can be **assessed through clinical tests** and sometimes imaging such as ultrasound or MRI is required. It is important to note that **pain is not always proportionate to the severity of injury**. It is possible to have a very painful injury with minimal damage or the other way around. Also, the grade of tearing is **less important compared to functional stability**.

### How long will it take?

Depending on the severity of the injury, **ligaments take 6-12 weeks to fully recover. BUT functional stability and enough loading is more important** than time so we use functional measures to guide return to sports rather than just time. For a grade 1-2 injury you will need to be in a hinged knee brace (HKB)

	<b>Week 0-1</b>	<b>Week 1-2</b>	<b>Week 3-6</b>	<b>Week 6-12</b>
Grade 1	HKB 30-140	HKB 20-140	Return to training	Return to play
	<b>Week 0-4</b>	<b>Week 4-6</b>	<b>Week 6-8</b>	<b>Week 8-12</b>
Grade 2	HKB 30-140	Full ROM + strength	Return to training	Return to play

**HOWEVER surgery is usually required with a complete tear** as it is unlikely to heal on its own. The LCL is normally reconstructed with a graft from the hamstring tendon and requires wearing a brace limiting extension for 3-6 weeks post op. After that time the rehab will look very similar to that of a grade 2 injury.

### What do I need to do before I return to sport?

Recurrence rates of LCL injuries in sport is high and one of the **biggest risk factors for injury is previous injury**. To minimise this risk it is essential to complete **a full and comprehensive rehab** specific to your sporting demands. This includes:

- Gradually loading up the knee and restoring full range of movement in the early phases
- Completing a tailored strength program **targeting complementary muscles** that help support the injured knee
- Retraining balance and proprioception with progressively challenging drills
- Progressively working towards **power and plyometric training**
- Resuming sport specific activities and **building up load tolerance and training volume**
- Return to **higher level sport specific activities** that challenge the injured muscle (eg. sprinting)
- Resume **full training** before returning to full competition