MCL injury

Description
Medial collateral knee ligament injury is a sprain (stretch or tear) of one of the four major ligaments of the knee. The medial collateral ligament (MCL) is a structure that helps keep the normal relationship of the femur (thigh bone) and the tibia (leg bone) along the inner side of the knee.

The MCL prevents the knee from buckling inward and is the ligament most commonly injured in sports. When torn, this ligament usually heals, although it may heal in a lengthened position (slightly loose).

Sprains are classified into three grades. In a first-degree sprain the ligament is not lengthened but is painful. With a second-degree sprain, the ligament is stretched but still functions. With a third-degree sprain, the ligament is torn and does not function.

Common signs and symptoms
- Pain and tenderness on the inner side of the knee
- A popping, tearing, or pulling sensation noted at the time of injury
- Swelling and bruising (after 24 hours) at the site of injury
- Knee stiffness
- Limping, often walking with bent knee

Causes
- Direct blow to the outer side of the knee, usually while the foot is planted on the ground
- Sudden increase in amount or intensity of activity

Risk of further injury
- Contact sports (football, rugby) and sports that require pivoting or cutting (changing direction), such as soccer or baseball.
- Poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility)

Initial treatment
Initial treatment consists of anti-inflammatory medication and ice to relieve pain and reduce the swelling of the knee. Walking with crutches until you walk without a limp is often recommended. Your physician may recommend a knee brace with a hinge to help regain knee motion while protecting the MCL. Range-of-motion, stretching, and strengthening exercises may be performed at home, although referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer is usually recommended.

Rehabilitation of MCL sprains generally concentrates on reducing knee swelling, regaining knee range of motion, regaining muscle control and strength, and a short period of bracing. For severe MCL sprains or those associated with other knee ligament injuries, surgery may be recommended.
Pain control:
Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as aspirin and ibuprofen (do not take within 7 days before surgery), or other minor pain relievers, such as acetaminophen, are often recommended. Take these as directed by your physician. Contact your physician immediately if any bleeding, stomach upset, or signs of an allergic reaction occur.

Stronger pain relievers may be prescribed as necessary by your physician. Use only as directed.

Swelling control:
Cold is used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation for acute and chronic cases. Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours for inflammation and pain and immediately after any activity that aggravates your symptoms. Use ice packs or an ice massage. Use Ice for the first 72 hours after the initial injury.

Knee exercises

Quadriceps sets
- Tighten muscles on top of the thigh by pushing knee down into the table or surface.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat this exercise about 15-20 times every hour.
Straight leg raises

- Tighten muscle on the front of the thigh, then lift your leg up about 8-10 inches off of the surface.
- Make sure that you keep your leg straight and knee locked.
- Hold for 5 seconds, then lower to the surface slowly, once your leg rests back on the table relax, then repeat.
- Do 3 sets of 15 for 2-3 sessions per day.
- Make sure that you perform this exercise on both legs.
Heel slides
- Lie on your back with injured leg extended on the wall.
- Concentrating on the heel of the painful knee, **slowly** slide the heel down as far as you can tolerate.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- **Slowly** slide the heel back up to the starting position.
- Do 3 sets of 5-10 for 2-3 sessions per day.
Wall slides

- Leaning on wall, **slowly** flex your knees into a squatting position. **Do not go past the point were your thighs are parallel with the ground.**
- Hold the squatting position for 3 seconds then extend your knees sliding up the wall to the starting position.
- Do 3 sets of 10-15 for 2-3 sessions per day.
Please call 859-323-5533 with questions or for more information.