Golf Swing Causing Knee Pain? Here's Why Transcript

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Introduction to Golf Knee Pain

Is your left knee screaming at you after every single round of golf that you play? Most golfers will try to ignore this or pass this off as just a sign of getting older.

But you might actually be destroying something in your knee called the medial miscus with every swing. My name is Dr. Gaian Puvendran. I am a medical doctor specializing in fixing knee pain in golf players without surgery.

Over the next few videos, I am going to show you exactly why that left lead leg takes a beating and how you're gonna fix it without quitting the game.

We all know the feeling or we've had our friends that have complained about that nagging ache, the sharp pain during your downswing, the persistent discomfort after a round of golf.

These are all signs that there could be something functional happening in your golf swing and your knee is paying the price for it. Today we're going to be diving deep into why this lead knee pain happens, what's going on inside your joint, and most importantly what you can do about it!

So let's start with something simple.

Why the Lead Knee Takes a Beating

Your left knee for right-handed golfers is the brakes. During your backswing, it's fine, but in your downswing it literally becomes a pivot point under massive force.

Here's the best way to visualize this. Imagine a wet towel. When you wring it out, you hold one end still and you twist the other on the force, your left foot, that's that end stuck in the ground that is still.

This is the still end. Now, your body up here is rotating with enormous power, hundreds of pounds of force, channeling through your torso, and you see what's happening?

Your knee? Cart right here? It's the middle of that ring. Now here's what makes golf a little different from other sports. You're not just standing on that knee, you're pivoting on it.

you're shifting your entire body weight forward multiple times per round. The forces that go through your lead knee can be up to three to four times your body.

So if you think about that, you are somebody like me that's 200 pounds, that is over 800 pounds of force twisting and compressing that knee in less than a second.

And that force isn't just going straight up and down like when you walk or when jump, it is twisting. Your knee also has to stay stable enough to anchor your body while also rotating to be able to complete your swing.

And THAT is where the damage happens. Now let's talk about this thing that's actually getting destroyed in your knee. It is called the medial meniscus.

Let me get my knee here. Think of your knee joint as a door hinge. It is designed to bend and straighten, open and close.

What the Medial Meniscus Does

And it's not designed, to twist like a spinning top. You see, I can't even twist it with this model. Between your thigh bone and your shin bone sits a C-shaped ring of cartilage.

This is your medial meniscus. Medial just means on the inner side of the knee, the side that is closest to the other leg. The meniskus acts like cushion.

Its a shock absorber, protecting your bones from grinding and bouncing against one another. In a healthy knee, when you bend or straighten your leg, this cushion compresses evenly and then springs right back to life.

But here's the problem in golf. During your downswing, you're forcing this question to do something that it was not designed for. You're compressing it and you are twisting it at the same time.

It's like taking a rubber washer and twisting while squeezing it between two boards. Eventually, something is going to tear. Now, here is what makes meniscus injuries particularly bad.

blood supply. Let's look at our meniscus again here. The outer edge of your meniskus, this red zone here, gets some blood flow, but the inner portion, almost none.

That means once it's torn, it cannot heal itself like other tissue does. It's like trying to repair a piece of rubber with no ability to grow new material.

So how do you know if your Meniscius is damaged? There are three classic signs that doctors look out for. Number one, do you have a sharp localized pain on the inner side of your knee?

Not just a general vague ache, something that you can point to. I frequently ask my patients that have meniscus injuries, where does it hurt? And they can take one finger and they will point right here somewhere where their meniskus is.

Signs of a Meniscus Injury

And when I put an ultrasound on, I'll see a tear. Number two, is there a catching or locking sensation? If it feels like something is physically blocking your knee from moving smoothly, it's like there's a pebble stuck in a door hinge.

number three, swelling that can come on within hours of playing. Not immediately during your round, not right after the round at the 19th of July, but by the next evening or later that evening, or the morning, your knees looks a little puffy, feels a bit swollen.

It may even feel like it has fluid in it. If you have any of these three signs, you need to see a doctor. But here's what most golfers don't actually realize.

The meniscus tear isn't the root problem. It is the result of the problem, the real issue here lies in biomechanics or the way that your body moves. If your hips are weak, your knee has to compensate by rotating more than it was supposed to.

If your foot rolls inwards like this, something that we call excessive pronation, you end up loading that meniscus even more. If you're swing mechanics are off, if you not went transferring your weight properly, your stance is too narrow, all of these force your knee to twist harder than it needs to to complete the swing.

And if think about every single round you are doing this 70, 80, maybe even 90 times per round. That's why a meniscus here in a golfer often happens gradually.

It's not something that happens right away. Its not one massive injury, it's thousands of micro traumas accumulating over months and years and hundreds of rounds of golf until finally the tissue just can't take it anymore and gives.

So here's a simple test that you can do right now to see if this might be an issue for you.

Biomechanics and the Real Cause

If you're able to stand, I want you to try this for me or save this and come back to it later. I you want to you stand on your lead leg. So if you are a right-handed golfer, this is your left knee and if your a left-hand golver, This is going to be your right knee.

Now I Iwant youto stand there on that one leg and slowly bend that knee And after you've bent it a little bit, I want you to start trying to rotate your body like you're following through on your golf.

What happened? What happens to your knee? Did your new wobble? did it cave inwards a bit towards the other leg? Do you feel unstable? If you answered yes to any of those, that's a sign that your stabilizer muscles are weak.

your glutes or your big butt muscles, your hip rotators, you're quad muscles those big beefy leg muscles on the front of your thigh, they're not doing their job.

So your meniscus is taking force that it shouldn't have to handle. I promised you some solutions to this without quitting the game. First, if you have sharp pain or swelling or locking or catching, stop guessing and stop being on internet and go see a doctor.

We can help look at you and help decide and understand what is going on. And if needed, we can order an MRI. You want to know and we want know if there is a tear and how bad it is.

But whether you have a tare or you're trying to prevent one, here are some things that can work. Solution number one. Very simple. you can flare your lead foot by turning your left toes out towards your target between 20 and 30 degrees.

What you end up doing is Turn your left toes out towards the target about 20 or 30 degrees.

Self-Test for Knee Stability

This ends up pre-rotating your leg so that your knee doesn't have to twist as far during your downswing. Less twist equals less meniscus stress. It's really that simple.

Solution number two is strengthen your hips, especially your glutes or those big butt muscles in the back. If those muscles are strong, they end up absorbing that twisting force instead of your knee.

What are the three best exercises for that? Single leg bridges, clam shells, and something called a lateral band walk. And before you get too worked up, relax.

This doesn't mean that you have to go to the gym and be like Arnold Schwarzenegger. this is just three times a week, two sets of 15 repetitions each time.

Do these three time per week. Two sets a 15 reps each. Your meniscus will thank you. Solution number three is work on your hip mobility. Your tight hips, or if your hips are tight, it forces your knee again to over-rotate.

Spend 10 minutes every day on internal rotation stretches and something called the 90-90 stretch. Solutions number four, a little bit more involved, but get your swing analyzed.

Ways to Reduce Knee Stress

A qualified golf pro or a physical therapist who understands golf flying mechanics can help identify swing flaws that you didn't even know that had. Sometimes a small adjustment like shifting your weight differently or widening your

stance can take an enormous stress off that knee.

And my favorite one, because I love shoes, is your shoes matter. If you're using metal spikes that lock your foot to the ground and your hips are tight, guess what's going to give out?

Your meniscus. Consider getting shoes that have less aggressive traction that allows a little bit of controlled foot rotation. Alright, let's wrap this up.

The bottom line is that your medial meniscus is the shock absorber on the inner side of your knee. Golf ends up forcing it to twist and compress simultaneously and that is not something that it is designed for.

Weak hips, poor mobility, bad swing mechanics all make it worse. But by flaring your foot, strengthening your glutes, working on your hip mobility fixing your technique, you can protect that knee Remember, your knee pain is your body telling you that something in your movement pattern needs attention.

Don't ignore it. Flare that foot out. Strengthen those hips. You'll be out driving your friends for years to come and having less knee-pain for it Now here's my standard disclaimer.

Wrap-Up and Medical Disclaimer

While I am a medical doctor, I'm not your medical doc. Not yet. If it hurts, go see a professional in person. This information that I gave you is meant to be educational.

It is not medical advice for your specific situation. If you found this video helpful, please help me out. Like the video and subscribe for more content on golf health and performance.

Leave a comment below for me and tell me what your experiences are with knee pain or what other topics you'd like me to cover next. Thanks for watching and here's for another healthy pain free round of golf.