Golf Swing Causing Knee Pain? MCL Explained Transcript

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Introduction to Inner Knee Pain

Have you ever wondered why your golf swing, the thing that you love the most, is starting to feel more like a trap for your left knee? You wake up the morning after a round, and there it is, right inside of your knee, this nagging ache.

Maybe it's sharp when you pivot, maybe if it was a dull throb that just doesn't go away. And the worst part of it, you don't even know what you did wrong.

You just went and played golf, just did the things you loved to do. Well, today, we're going to change that. Because once you understand why your knee hurts, you can start doing something about it.

Hi, everybody. I'm Dr. Guyon Kuventrin. And I am a medical doctor, and I have spent the last 15 years helping golfers get back to their game without surgery.

If you've been following along with me in this series, You know that we already talked about the meniscus in our last video. That's the cushiony pad that's on the inside of your knee that takes a beating every time you take a swing.

If you haven't watched that one yet, we'll link to it below. It's a great foundation for what we're covering today, because today we are talking about the MCL, or the medial collateral ligament.

This is one of those body parts that you never really think about it until it starts to scream at you. And if you're a golfer with pain on your inside knee, This video is made for you, so let's get into it.

What the MCL Is and Where It Sits

Let's talk about what the MCL actually is in plain language. No medical textbook needed, I promise. Picture your knee as a door hinge. It bends forwards and backwards, right?

Now that hinge joint needs something to keep it from wobbling from side to side. That's where your ligaments come in. Ligaments are tough, fibrous bands, kind of like really strong rubber bands that connect bone to other bones.

The MCL, or the medial collateral ligament, is just one of those rubber band. It runs on the inside of your knee here, from the bottom of the thigh bone, to the top of you shin bone.

keep the inside of your knee stable and keep it from shifting when it's not supposed to. Now, in my last video, we talked about the meniscus, which is a shock absorbing pad that sits on the inner side of the knee joint.

The MCL is on outside the joint on your inner leg. It's a different structure, but it is in the same neighborhood. See, meniskus here, MCl here. And like noisy neighbors, when one of them has a problem, the other one often feels it too.

So when somebody tells me I have pain on the inside of my knee, one of the things that I'm immediately thinking about is that MCL. And if they're a golfer, my ears really start to perk up.

Where is your pain? Before we talk about why this happens in golf, I want you to do something for me. I Want you To touch the Inside of your left knee.

The part of Your knee that's closest to your other leg and gently press along that inner edge. Do you feel any tenderness there, maybe a little soreness when you press?

Or does it hurt when try to straighten your leg after it's been bent? Maybe it aches after a full round of golf right in that same spot. If you're nodding along with me yes right now, I see you.

How Golf Stresses the MCL

And that's exactly what MCL irritation feels like. It's not this big dramatic thing. Sometimes it's just a steady frustrating ache that builds up over weeks or months of doing what you love.

And the worst thing that I hear from patients is this. I thought I just had to push through it. Let me be very clear. No, no, and no. This is your body talking to you.

So let's learn what it's saying. Here's the big picture. this is the fundamental problem. Golf and the golf swing is a rotational sport. You're winding up your, body you're storing this energy and then you releasing it all at once to your hips, your torso and your arms.

It is beautiful when it works, but it is brutal on your joints when something goes wrong in that chain. Your lead leg, that's your left leg if you're a right-handed golfer, acts like an anchor during the downswing.

Your whole body is rotating around it. And while that is happening, your knee is being pulled in multiple directions all at once. So there's a couple of causes for this.

Cause number one is what we call the valgus stress. or the knee caving in. Here's the big one. During your downswing and your follow-through, watch what your left knee does.

In many golfers, especially beginners, but this also happens in experienced players as well, that knee will start to collapse slightly inwards towards your other leg.

We call this a valgus stress. Valgus is just a medical term that says angled in words or towards the middle of your body. Every time your knee caves in like that, you are stretching that MCL, that little rubber band that's on the inside of your knees.

You do it once, sure, no big deal, but you do every swing for every round for weeks and months. Now we're talking about developing a real problem. Think about it like stretching this hair tie.

You pull it back a little bit, it bounces right back. But if I keep pulling this over and over again in the same spot, eventually it's going to weaken.

It's gonna fray. it won't stretch back, won' bounce back and eventually, It breaks. Cause number two is something called forceful pivoting. The transition from our backswing to your downswing is a violent transition and I mean that in most mechanical sense possible.

there is a rapid explosive reversal of force. And right at that moment of transition, your lead knee has to handle a sudden changing cutting motion or a sharp forceful pivot.

If your body isn't ready for that, if your muscles are tight or your mechanics are off, that pivot can overstretch or even partially tear this MCL ligament.

This is actually very similar to what you may hear or see about in cutting sports like basketball or soccer. Golf is not as extreme, but it sure is the same principle.

Now here's where we're going to get a little bit more technical, because this one is a little sneaky. When your lead foot is planted firmly on the ground and your hips start to rotate powerfully towards your target, you create something called torque.

Torque is physics term meaning twisting force. That twisting forces passes right through your knee. Now your

knees is not a great rotating joint. Your hip is, your ankle is to some degree, but your as I liked to say earlier, is really a hinge joint.

It only likes to bend and straighten. it does not like to twist. So when you ask your knee to handle a rotation that should be coming through your hip or your ankle, it's gonna protest.

And your MCL right there on the inside is one of the things that takes the hit. This is what we mean when we say that rotation is stolen from the knee.

If your hips are stiff, if your ankles are tight, your knee has no choice but to step in and compensate, and then it pays the price.

Self-Check for MCL Irritation

Cost number four is the quiet villain, overuse. Let's talk about the one that nobody wants to hear about, repetition. Now, you may not have done anything wrong in one single swing, but multiply that little damage over 100 swings per round, multiple rounds per week, month after month.

That's what we call repetitive microtrauma. Tiny little injuries that never fully heal before the next one comes along. This is how chronic MCL pain develops.

It doesn't start with a pop, it starts with the whistle. and a little stiffness here and little tenderness there and you ignore it and it gets louder and louder.

And now you're on YouTube looking at videos about why your knee hurts. Alright, I want you to do this with me. Pause the video if you need to but I think you can do it while you are watching.

Step number one is I what you stand up, lift your right foot off the ground and balance on your left leg only. Keep your left foot flat on the ground and I want you to try to rotate your hips just very gently from left to right.

What did you notice? Well there's a few things that you should be looking out for. Number one, did your right left knee start to wobble or feel unstable?

Does your knee starts to collapse inwards towards your other knee when you try and rotate? Do you feel like your knees is doing the rotation rather than your hip or your ankle?

If you answered yes to any of those, you found out something very important. Your glutes, those big beefy muscles in your backside, and your ankle stabilizers are not doing their job.

And when those muscles check out, your right knee or your left knee, whichever one is your lead knee has to check in. It comes right into the firing line.

Now, I hear you saying this, but This isn't about weakness in a bad way.

Quick Fixes to Reduce Knee Stress

It's about a pattern, a biomechanical habit, something that's crept in over years and months of playing without you even knowing it. And now that you know it, we can talk about how to fix it So let's talk some quick fixes to reduce your MCL stress.

Now, these are not a substitute for seeing a doctor or physical therapist if you're already in pain, but they are smart, simple things that can start doing today to start reducing the stress on your NCL.

Fix number one is flare your lead foot. Now we've already discussed this in our last video, but I'm going to repeat it here because I think it is the single most impactful setup change that you can make.

When you address the ball, point your left foot outwards towards your target by about 20 or 30 degrees. Why does this work? because it pre-rotates your ankle and hip so that they can absorb the torque of your swing before it ever reaches your knee.

Instead of you knee twisting to compensate, your ankles and your hip are already aligned and ready. We call this creating a triple stack. Your ankle, knee, hip, are all lined up properly.

It's a small change, but for your MCL, it is a game changer. Fix number two is working on your hip mobility. If your hips are stiff, your knee will suffer, period.

Remember that simple 90-90 stretch we talked about last time, the one where you sit on the floor with both knees bent at 90 degrees and you rotate your torso gently over each hip?

This can significantly improve your rotational range of motion. So all you have to do is try holding it for 60 seconds per side every morning. Do this three weeks consistently and I think you're going to really notice a difference in how that lead leg feels during your follow through in your swing.

Fix number three, activate your glutes. Remember that balance test we did earlier, the knee collapsing inwards a little bit? The fix for that is gluteal activation.

Now I know, most of you golfers out there have had that phrase burned into your brains from when Tiger Woods was coming back from injury and struggling with his swing.

Your gluteus medius is a muscle on the outer side of your hip and it is responsible for controlling the alignment of the knee. So when it's weak or if it asleep, your other knee drifts in.

A simple banded sidewalk or clamshell exercise just a few minutes before your round. This can help wake that muscle up, get it activating and keep your knee tracking properly.

If you don't know how to do this, your physical therapist or golf trainer can show you how do these movements, or a quick search online will find some really great examples.

Fix number four. Don't ignore early symptoms. Now, I know this isn't a flashy fix, but it might be the most important one. If your feeling that nagging inner knee pain after a round, take it seriously.

Rest for a day, and if it persists beyond a week or two, please go see a doctor. The MCL has a really good ability to heal on its own, only if you give it a chance.

All right, I want to leave you with this. Your knee is not betraying you. It is protecting you, but it's doing it in the only way it knows how, by making sure you stop and pay attention.

The MCL is a tough little ligament that handles an enormous amount of stress in a golf swing, and when the joints are rounded, your hip, ankle, aren't doing their job, it has to step up.

When to Get Help and Final Advice

And then it gives more than it should and more that it can. Eventually, its going to start telling you. Now you know what its saying, now you have a starting point.

Here is my standard disclaimer. While I am a medical doctor, I'm not your medical Doctor. Not yet anyway. If this hurts or if your knee hurts, go see a professional in person.

The information here is meant to be educational. It is not medical advice for your specific condition. Now if this video helps you even a little bit, if it just gave you the name for what you're suffering from or what have you been feeling, please hit that like button and subscribe if you want to keep learning about how your body works in the

sport you love.

And also, leave me a comment below. Where exactly is your knee pain? How long have you had it? I read each and every single one. And if you haven't seen the last video on the meniscus, please make sure that you watch that one next.

It's gonna help give you a lot more context on what we were covering today. Remember, take care of your body. it's the only one you've got. Alright, now get out there, keep chasing those birdies, and I'll see you in the next one!