

# Watch Your Knees

*Women are more prone to injuries, specifically those that affect the knees, than men.*

Do you love to run? Or simply love running after your kids? Then you should take extra care where your knees are concerned. According to Dr Michael Soon, orthopaedic surgeon at Mount Elizabeth Hospital, your knees are the most prone to anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tears.

This band of tissue, found in the middle of your knee, together with other ligaments in your leg, ensures the stability of your knee joint during bending, extension and pivoting exercises. Repetitive motions, along with the pressure and strain on your knees when jumping and landing – especially in sports like running, netball, or even missing a step on the staircase – can cause ACL injuries.

The kicker? “Women are more prone to ACL injuries than men,” says Dr Soon. “This is due to the differences in the biomechanics and structure of the female body.”

## **The hips don't lie**

Look at your hips: Women have a wider pelvis than men. This increases the Q-Angle, where your upper leg bone meets the lower leg bone which, in turn, adds to the stress on the knee joints and causes it to lose its stability.

The way you land from a jump can also raise your risk of ACL injuries. “Women use their muscles differently from men. They tend to use only their quadriceps when landing from a jump, while men tend to use both their quadriceps and hamstrings. Together with the larger rotational force due to the Q-Angle, this increases the risk of ACL ruptures,” says Dr Soon.

## **Pop goes the knee**

When an ACL tear happens, you will hear a “pop”, followed by pain and swelling of the knee joint. When that happens, seek immediate treatment. “Your doctor will order an MRI to confirm the diagnosis, as well as to determine the presence of other injuries to surrounding structures like the meniscus – which



helps to absorb shock in the knee – and other ligaments,” adds Dr Soon.

Surgery is generally recommended after an ACL injury for the patient to be able to return to an active lifestyle. The Arthroscopic ACL reconstruction is a common and minimally invasive “keyhole” surgery, where a tissue graft is required to replace the ruptured ACL. This day surgery is followed with intensive physiotherapy for about three to six months.

“The recovery outcome from an ACL reconstructive surgery is generally excellent. The patient is usually able to return to normal sporting activities about six to nine months after surgery,” says Dr Soon. So watch your knees and take appropriate measures to prevent an injury.

For more information or to make an appointment with the specialists from Mount Elizabeth Hospital, call their 24-hour Helpline at 6250-0000.

### **TIP!**

Be nicer to your knees. Wear shoes that are appropriate for your foot type and surface that you are exercising on. This way, your footwear will bear the brunt of the impact rather than your knees.