

# Dr. Colin Gage

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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Ever Tweaked Your Knee?

Have you ever done a simple hop, long step, or a small slip and felt a sharp pain in one of your knees? Yes, it hurt a lot, but not as much as it hurts your ego that such a simple action could be so debilitating. Unfortunately, the pain can last for weeks and can really interfere with your quality of life.

For example, I had a healthy young patient come into my office last week with this exact problem. Although she has bad luck with rare golfing injuries in the past, she has had no history of knee problems. She was almost embarrassed to admit that all she did was hop over the area where her golfing companion would have had to put. She immediately felt a sharp pain and heard a "pop". Such a simple thing created so much pain that she could not even finish her game. She claimed that there was not even a twisting motion in the knee when she landed. Like most people, she applied ice to it and hoped that it would simply go away. Well, that didn't happen. She was coming in to see me two weeks later and was still unable to walk more than a block.

Once I examined her knee, it was apparent that the ligaments were not torn. However, when I palpated the area and stressed the knee in certain ways, it became apparent that she had a mild sprain of the inside knee ligament (medial collateral ligament) and cartilagenous cushion (meniscus) between the bones of the knee. These two structures are commonly injured at the same time when the knee joint is stressed in just the right way.

Now that she knew why her knee hurt and that it would not require surgery, she was very relieved (and promised not to have more than three coolers while golfing). She was also very keen to do what she needed to do to get better. The first thing she had to do, which she liked the least, was to continue to ice the area and stay off of her knee for a week or two. This required her to stop all of her physical activity. Again, she was not impressed. The second thing she had to do was to show up regularly in my office during those two weeks for treatment. She wasn't too impressed with that either.

In regards to treatment, I used electrical stimulation (called "interferential current") on the injured ligament and meniscus. This helped reduce the inflammation and promote healing. I also showed her how to "wrap" it with a tensor bandage to give it a little more

support when she was weight bearing. Although her bike was dusty and both tires were flat from not being used for so long, I recommended that she start using it mildly to get the injured joint moving a bit. Riding a bike is good for rehabilitating an injured knee because it gets the joint moving, but in a straight motion without any twisting. As well, with any knee injury, the thigh muscles can become weak very quickly if they are not being used regularly. Riding a bike will also help prevent this.

Over a period of four to five weeks, her knee healed quite well. She is now back participating in her regular physical activities. As a bonus, she has rediscovered her love of mountain biking again, which is a great overall fitness activity.