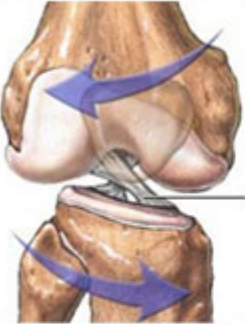


# ACL TEAR?



## NO WORRIES..

\*from diagnosis to therapy

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## Preface

### *Me today. It could be YOU!*



Prior to my ACL tear, I was a Taekwondo 2<sup>nd</sup> dan. I trained hard in a tournament, too hard that I had trouble walking up the stairs or squatting after training. Being young and naïve, I ignored the pain and competed. In a match, while chambering for a roundhouse, I snapped my leg back so hard, I heard a POP and when I landed, my knee gave way. Being the stubborn mule I was, I thought it was nothing. Coach dragged me out, sprayed some counter-pain and limped back in. Another roundhouse and I fell again. At that time, deep down, I knew my fighting days were over. I went to the emergency room and Xrays were taken. The general practitioner told me I sprained my knee and prescribed a month of rest. I still felt something was wrong as I could no longer keep my balance and there was pain when I try

to execute a roundhouse kick. But I dismissed the worry, crossing my fingers and hoping that a month of rest would take care of everything.

After 1 month, I played squash. As squash required a lot of cutting and sudden change of direction, I felt the 2 bones in my leg grind together. The next thing I knew, I was on the floor unable to stand. I had dislocated my knee. It took a lot of pain and curses to pop it back in place.

I booked an appointment with an orthopedic soon after and he gave me a drawer test. He told me I had an ACL tear but was unable to determine the severity of the tear without a scope or MRI. I opted for the MRI and the results showed a fully torn ACL. He gave me an option to lay off sports for good. I tried resuming Taekwondo but I could not even get past the stretching and warm ups. My knee felt unstable.

For a year, I was undecided whether to have the surgery or not. The word 'surgery' alone was scary and when the orthopedic said that even with surgery, I would only recover 80% of the use of my knee. Finally when I gained 5 kgs in 1 year due to inactivity, I got off my ass and opted for ACL recon.

I was hospitalized for 7 days and took 2 months to get back on my feet. Truthfully, my recovery was a bit slower than normal ACL recon cases. Even after 2 months, my knee felt weak but that was due to a fall I had post-op. My right leg was smaller than my left due to my favoring my leg while walking. I resumed Taekwondo. It was the best way to recover, jump right back in. The first few classes were shaky and I no longer had confidence, but the more I practiced, the stronger I got and the stronger I got, the more I practiced.

With renewed confidence, I took my 3<sup>rd</sup> dan Taekwondo grading early this year (2006), passed it and went for my International Referee Qualification Test. Being a referee meant keeping pace with the

players which involved split second sudden changes of directions. I'm proud that I can do this now although I suffered from ACL tear previously. Today I'm a qualified International Referee.

I also started learning Kyokushin Karate this year (2006). It is renowned to be the world's strongest karate with full contact fights without protective gear. We train and condition our bodies to accept real kicks and punches. Can you imagine a person with a surgical graft in her knee who is now able to take direct kicks to the knee with no serious injury other than ordinary bruises? I even competed in Taekwondo tournaments. Although the results are not as satisfying as before, I attribute this to age and fitness and not the knee. In June 2006, I also took part in a national marathon. I did not finish first or even in the top 10 (I couldn't do it even if I had no ACL tear!) but I made the qualifying time and for the first time in 4 years, I no longer needed the security of wearing a knee guard. I achieved my personal milestone.

The ACL recon knee is no longer hampering my movement. It is as good as new.

I'm writing this because I wasted 1 year of my competition life, wondering if I should go for ACL recon. I had to research all the ACL tear information, weigh the pros and cons before even considering surgery. You can listen to professionals but they have never had ACL tears, they do not know what it feels like to be on the other side of the fence, looking into the sport that you used to love. I want to share my experience pre and post surgery to let you know that surgery is not as scary as it sounds. This is not a medical textbook on ACL. It is my personal encounter with ACL from tear to recon to recovery. If you do opt for surgery, you can use this book as a companion to keep you motivated. Look what I have achieved in 4 years. If I can do it, YOU definitely can!

**Lex Hooi**

**3<sup>rd</sup> dan Taekwondo WTF Black Belt**

**Taekwondo International Referee**

**Kyokushin karate**

Enough with the medical jargon. You are riddled with knee pains. Your active lifestyle has taken a backseat due to instability in your knee. You are certainly not in the mood to filter through tons of scientific information on the net, trying to find one that can help you. But I can.

**Why should you listen to me?**

- I had an ACL tear in 2001
- I was an athlete whose lifestyle was changed upon the injury
- I had ACL reconstruction in 2002
- I am now active back in sports – in Kyokushin Karate, the strongest karate that features full contact sports and direct contact to the knee
- I present ACL information to you in easy to read format for those who have the injury and are wondering on treatment

## Definition

### ***Ligament***

Wikipedia defines ligament as the fibrous tissue that connects 2 bones. For the knees, the ligament comes in pairs. One to prevent forward movement, the other to prevent backward movement. Together; they stabilize and hold the knee in place so you can step front and back or move in a zigzag.




### ***ACL tear***

#### Causes

- Rapid deceleration
- Sudden change of direction
- Twisting of knee while landing

#### Common affected sports

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martial art</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ski</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long jump</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Squash &amp; badminton</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Football</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basketball</li></ul>	

## Symptom

Do note ACL tears can be mis-diagnosed by General practitioners and medical officers. Be wary, this may lead to aggravated injury. I was misdiagnosed as my knee was not swollen. The doctor gave me painkillers and told me to take a month rest. I did and after the month, I played squash. Due to the tear which I was not aware of at that time, I dislocated my knee.

When you're not sure, always get a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion, or a referral to an orthopedic. This is money not worth saving.

You know you have an ACL tear when:

- Audible 'pop'
- Unstable knee when climbing up/down stairs
- Tendency of knee to move forward/backwards while walking

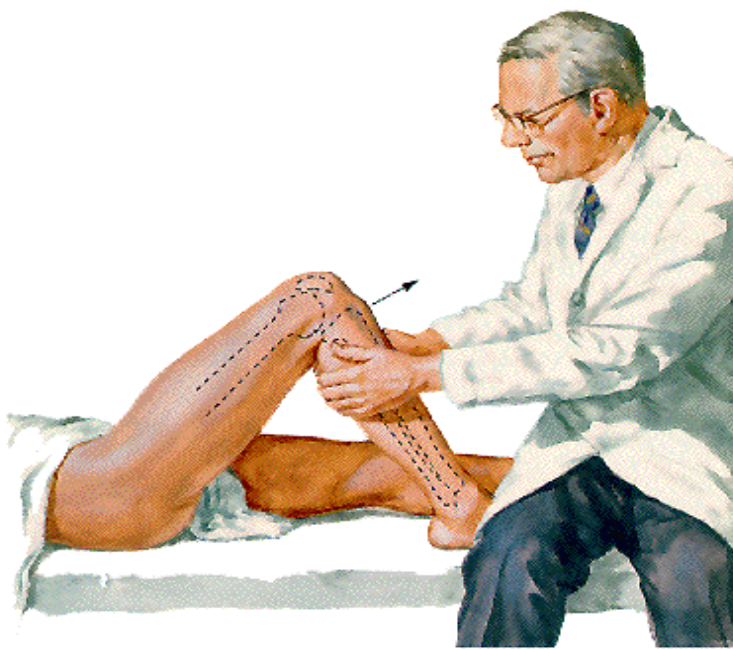


## Diagnosis

- Drawer test (pic+ description)
- MRI
- Lachman Test (pic + description)
- Arthroscopy



### ***Drawer test Procedure***



Lie down with knees bent at 90 degrees. The examiner sits on the patient's feet and grasps the patient's [tibia](#) and pulls it forward (anterior drawer test) or backward (posterior drawer test). If the tibia pulls forward or backward more than normal, the test is considered positive.

### ***Lachman Test Procedure***



With the left hand holding the thigh down, right hand gently applies pressure up. An uninjured knee will have no laxity and won't budge. Mine moved 2 inches upward. However, you should compare the knee movement with your uninjured knee as a comparison.

## ***MRI Procedure***

My experience in MRI

In my country, MRI costs USD200. I went for the MRI to determine the extent of my injury; to aid the decision whether to go for ACL recon (if it is only partially torn, I will forego the surgery). Have you watched a person having a CAT scan on TV? Machine looks exactly like it. It is claustrophobic and noisy and you are not allowed to move or fidget. Do remember to clear your bladder before starting the procedure.

The nurse gave me a surgical gown and told me to take off all metal objects. Then I laid down on the slab. She gave me a headphone to cover the noise and a panic button to push. Then she pushed me in.

The procedure took more than half hour. By the time you're finished, you're half deaf and cramping. The end result is a colored Xray of cross sections of your knee like this:



This is only Part 1 of the book “ACL Tear – from Diagnosis to Therapy”.  
There’s more!

Read more about:

- Arthroscopy
- Treatment
- ACL Reconstruction diary
- Physiotherapy
- Exercises
- Equipment
- Prevention

Get the ebook here

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