

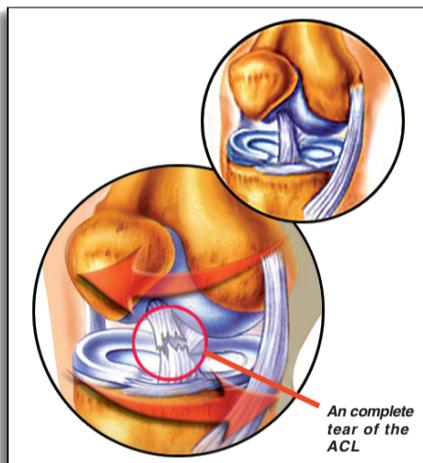
The ACL Epidemic: Every Athlete's Nightmare

By Sharon Wentworth, DPT, MSPT, ATC Elite Sports Physical Therapy
Part 1 of a 4-Part Series

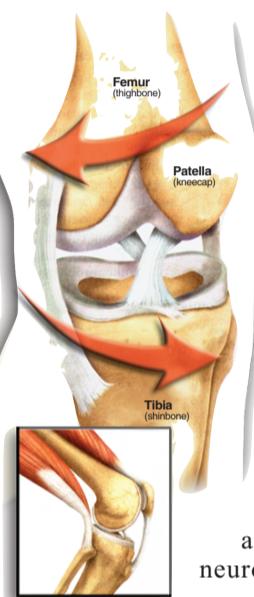
It is an athlete's worst nightmare - feeling your knee twist, hearing the "pop" as the ligament explodes inside the knee, sensing the pain that shoots through the leg as you crumple to the ground, and realizing that all of your athletic goals and dreams will have to be put on hold for at least the next six months of your life.

If you have played sports, coached sports, or parented an athlete, you most likely know someone who has torn their ACL.

The 3-letter acronym, which stands for Anterior Cruciate Ligament, is every athlete's Nightmare.



ACL injuries occur when bones of the leg twist in opposite directions under full body weight



This is especially true for the female athlete. Statistics show the chances of tearing the ACL are four to eight times higher for females than males. A recent study performed by the NCAA concluded that three out of ten female collegiate athletes participating in ACL high risk sports (gymnastics, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, and volleyball) will tear their ACLs. This statistic truly is at epidemic proportions. So, what in the world is going on?

The ACL is located inside the knee and stops the shin bone from sliding forward on the thigh bone.

The ACL most often tears when the athlete is decelerating (cutting, jumping, landing from a jump, etc.). Usually, there is no contact involved. An athlete might just be running down the field or the court and go to change directions and "pop" there goes the ACL. Unfortunately, when this ligament tears, it is unable to repair itself so it must be surgically reconstructed.

The question of why female athletes tear their ACLs more often than males is not yet completely answered. We do believe that there are several factors that play into it such as anatomical differences, hormones, and neuromuscular/biomechanical differences.



Dr. Frank Noyes, Cincinnati Sports Medicine and Orthopaedic Center president and director, has been studying these factors and possible ways of preventing ACL tears for over 20 years. Sportsmetrics (www.sportsmetrics.net), the only research-backed ACL prevention program in the country, was developed by Dr. Noyes and utilizes strength, coordination, balance, and proper dynamic neuromuscular/biomechanical patterning to decrease female athlete's risk of ACL tears. After extensive training with Dr. Noyes, I am now a certified Sportsmetrics provider. Along with Joe McAuliffe and The Edge Sports Academy, I will be offering this program over the summer.

I have been providing rehabilitation to Shore Conference athletes for over five years now and I am constantly alarmed by the

increasing number of ACL injuries. Since I had my ACL reconstructed following a volleyball injury, I not only know how to rehab these athletes, I have experienced it firsthand. I feel strongly that we as sports medicine practitioners, have an obligation to do whatever we can to decrease the risk of this devastating injury. If you have questions or would like information about the rehabilitation or the prevention of ACL injuries or the Sportsmetrics program, please call me at Elite Sports Physical Therapy: 732-544-0011.

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Provides one-on-one aggressive but safe rehabilitation, enabling today's athletes to return to competition quicker and healthier than ever before.

Elite Sports Physical Therapy is conveniently housed within the **EDGE** Sports Academy and Health Club. This partnership makes her practice truly unique and allows her to specialize in the rehabilitation of **ELITE** athletes.



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