ATKINS
PHYSIOTHERAPY
CONSULTANTS

MEDIAL COLLATERAL LIGAMENT SPRAIN AT THE KNEE

The collateral ligaments of the knee lie on either side of the joint and restrict sideways movement. The wider ligament is on the inside of the joint where it helps to resist torsion with the foot fixed and the knee bent – as in twisting movements whilst playing football, skiing etc. In that position the ligament can be overstretched and because it attaches closely to the joint covering (capsule) it can set up a traumatic arthritis with swelling, pain, stiffness and limitation of movement. Pain will be felt on stretching the ligament with a sideways movement of the knee. In the acute situation, the patient may need to be given crutches to walk.

Physiotherapy can help in both the acute and chronic stages, when the problem may have persisted for six weeks or more. In the acute stage ice and massage can be applied to the joint to reduce swelling and pain. A specific massage technique called frictions is applied across the tender site to maintain movement and bending and straightening of the knee is encouraged in the pain free range. Electrotherapy, usually ultrasound, can be applied to the ligament to reduce pain and to promote healing.

In the more chronic stage, scar tissue will have formed that can restrict the extremes of bending and straightening. Frictions are applied with a smart manipulative technique at the end of each movement to allow the joint to move more freely. Vigorous bending and straightening of the knee is encouraged to keep the knee moving normally after treatment.