

MCL Injury Diagnostic Criteria

Patient information	
Name:	Assessment date:
Age:	Assessed by:
<p>The following criteria are designed to aid in physical examinations where medial collateral ligament injury (MCL) is suspected. In most cases, a medical professional can diagnose an MCL injury and assess its severity based on a physical examination*. MCL injuries are categorized as grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3 based on the extent of tearing. In some cases, additional tests such as MRIs or X-rays may be necessary to confirm the diagnosis or the extent of the damage.</p> <p><i>*Physical examinations should include an abduction (valgus) stress test at 30 degrees flexion, where the valgus instability of the injured knee is compared to the non-injured knee. Medial laxity, or increased 'gapping' of the injured knee with side-to-side stressing, is a key diagnostic tool for determining the extent of MCL damage</i></p>	
MCL injury criteria	
MCL injury grading	Graded symptom criteria
Grade 1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% or less of MCL fibers are torn • Knee stability is largely intact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild to moderate pain and tenderness on the medial side of the knee • Local swelling • No significant gapping under valgus stress
Grade 2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial tear to MCL • Increased MCL laxity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to severe pain and tenderness on the medial side of the knee • Local swelling • Looseness of the medial knee joint when pressure is applied • Medial knee gapping under valgus stress test, with an endpoint*
Grade 3	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe or complete tear of MCL • Gross laxity of the MCL • Commonly occur alongside injuries to other parts of the knee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain and tenderness of the medial side of the knee (note complete tears of the MCL may be less painful than partial tears) • Significant swelling • Significant looseness of the medial knee joint when pressure is applied • Significant medial knee gapping under valgus stress test, without a clear endpoint*

Additional signs and symptoms of an MCL injury

- The injury was caused by a high-impact blow to the lateral aspect of the knee or forceful external rotation of the joint
- A 'popping' sound followed by immediate medial line joint pain at the time of injury
- Ecchymosis, typically in the days following the injury
- The patient experiences pain or instability when walking on the injured leg

Patient's MCL injury grade:

Additional notes

Cleveland Clinic. (2021, October 18). *Medial collateral ligament (MCL) tear: Treatment & recovery time*. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/21979-mcl-tear>

Vosoughi, F., Rezaei Dogahe, R., Nuri, A., Ayati Firoozabadi, M., & Mortazavi, J. (2021). Medial collateral ligament injury of the knee: A review on current concept and management. *The Archives of Bone and Joint Surgery*, 9(3), 255–262. <https://doi.org/10.22038/abjs.2021.48458.2401>