



On the Bench

Former **Bay News 9** sports reporter and anchor Chris O'Connell found out firsthand what it's like to suffer a major sports injury. He was playing recreational flag football when he heard his knee pop.

Doctors did an MRI and found that Chris had a complete tear of his [Anterior Cruciate Ligament or ACL](#). In addition, he suffered a miniscule tear, which required an arthroscopy of the knee.

The ACL is one of four ligaments that are critical to the stability of the knee joint. Each ligament controls excessive motion by limiting joint mobility. If too much pressure is applied, then the ligament can tear.

The ACL injury is the most common of all knee ligament injuries. ACL patients often say they feel their knee is going to give out on them at any moment.



Chris underwent surgery at the [Palms of Pasadena Hospital](#) to replace his ACL. The surgeon drilled a hole into Chris's tibia and femur. Metal screws were then inserted into the bone and then a donated ACL was secured into place.

Most people who tear their ACL do so while taking part in a sporting activity of some kind.

The procedure took three hours.

The following high-demand sports are the most demanding on the knee:

- Football**
- Soccer**
- Basketball**
- Skiing**
- Gymnastics**
- Hockey (ice and field)**
- Wrestling**
- Lacrosse**
- Rugby**

Not everyone with an ACL injury has to undergo surgery like Chris. It depends on the severity of the tear, the age of the patient, the activity level of the patient, the degree of instability of the joint, and the ability and willingness of the patient to take part in extensive rehabilitation.

A critical component of Chris' recovery is his adherence to his physical training schedule. Physical therapist [Peter Leilly](#) of [Alexander Orthopaedic Associates](#) says it could take several months for Chris to recover, even if he religiously follows his therapy schedule.

"Unfortunately, people who have ACL injuries, the amount of time necessary to rebuild the muscles can take three to five months," said Leilly. "It's critical if you want to live the rest of your life with a healthy leg, so it's well worth investing time now."



Orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Vladimir Alexander evaluates Chris' knee.

Chris is on a six-month rehabilitation schedule and, he says he plans to stick to it so he can continue to lead an active life.