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Osteochondral Defect of the Talus (OCLT)

Osteochondral Defect of the Talus (OCLT) is a condition that involves the cartilage of the ankle joint – specifically the talus. The ankle joint is made up of three different bones (tibia, fibula, and talus). Cartilage is the smooth surface between the bones that allows for shock absorption and smooth gliding of the different bones when there is motion. An OCLT is when the cartilage is damaged on the talus – and this can occur from an injury such as a sprain, or from higher energy injuries such has ankle fractures. What defines this cartilage injury from arthritis is that an OCLT is isolated damage to the talus and typically does not lead to arthritis in the future. However, the damaged cartilage area can cause pain, clicking if it is loose, and in some cases a sense that the ankle is not stable and gives out.

When diagnosing an OCLT, xrays are useful to determine if there is any spurring (bony prominences) that are associated, or if there is any deformity or arthritis in the ankle (lack of cartilage on both the tibia and the talus). In many cases further imaging is needed, most commonly a MRI as an isolated cartilage injury cannot be detected by an xray. With an MRI, the physician can determine the presence of an OCLT and other soft tissue problems that are associated with this condition, such as ligamentous injury and inflammation of the ankle joint.

Treating an OCLT does not always require surgery and this condition has not been proven to lead to arthritis. Our goal is to provide the patient with options to improve their life quality with both non-surgical and surgical options. Non-surgical options include activity modification, physical therapy to provide improved ankle stability, and the use a lace up ankle brace maximize your quality of life without undergoing surgery. In cases where surgery is required, we employ innovative techniques for cartilage restoration including the use of your own stem cells and cartilage resurfacing. The options that we employ do not require cutting of your normal bone to access the joint and does not require taking cartilage and bone from your knee in order to minimize the trauma to your normal cartilage.