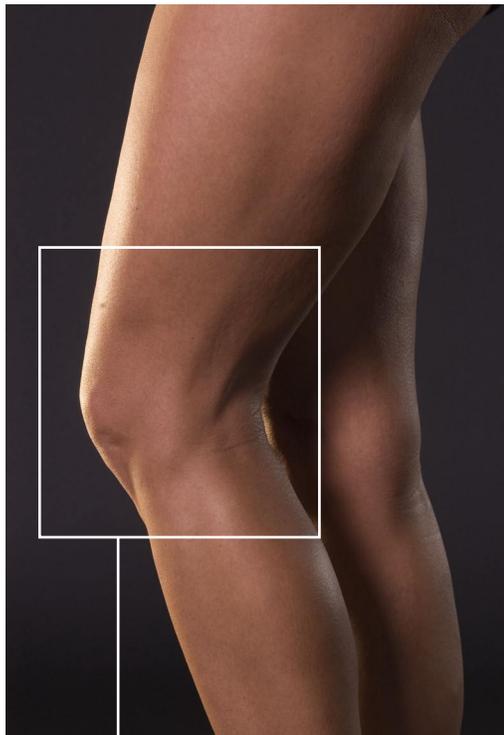


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By **James Franklin**
Associated Press



Women are more susceptible to ligament injuries, as women in military training are 10 times more likely to tear a knee ligament than men.

BALTIMORE - Women at the U.S. Naval Academy are nearly 10 times more likely to tear a knee ligament during military training than men, according to a study conducted by four academy physicians.

Six out of 1,956 female midshipmen tore ligaments during military training, compared to only five out of 15,871 of male midshipmen, said the study presented Monday to the Society of Military Orthopedic Surgeons meeting in Vail, Colo.

While women were 9.74 times more likely than men to be injured during training, which includes running the obstacle course and instructional wrestling. The overall knee injury ratio for female midshipmen was only 2.44 times more than that for male midshipmen.

The Naval Academy said it would do a thorough review of the physicians' study, but plans no immediate changes in its training regimen.

The study not only looked at injuries women received during military training, but also while participating in college sports, including intercollegiate soccer, basketball and rugby. Students with a history of ligament injury prior to admission were not included in the study, which was conducted from June 1991 to June 1997.

Orthopedic surgeon **Dr. Jacob Rozbruch**, who also is a professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, said women don't have as much muscle around their knee joints and therefore their ligaments are less protected.

Women's joints also tend to be more lax, making them more susceptible to ligament injuries, **Rozbruch** said. This laxity can be exacerbated by monthly changes in hormones.

Women can reduce the risk of injury through strength training exercises such as lifting weights, said Barry Kagan, a strength and conditioning coach at the University of Maryland who works with female athletes.

"I wouldn't say you can avoid it, but you can at least reduce the risk," said Kagan.

The U.S. Military Academy and U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., were unaware of similar studies on their students.

Lt. Com. Rob Newell, spokesman at the Navy's Great Lakes Training Center in East Chicago, Ind., where enlisted personnel are trained, said he's never heard of any similar studies.

"Right now we're still training men and women together," Newell said.

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For more information on Dr. Rozbruch, visit www.jacobrozbruchmd.com