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The impact of sensory deficits after harvesting hamstrings autograft for ACL reconstruction.

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Abstract

PURPOSE: The aim of this study was threefold: to investigate the incidence of sensory deficits **after** harvesting hamstrings autografts, to localise and measure the area of altered sensibility and to investigate the impact of any sensory deficit on the patients daily life.

METHODS: A consecutive series of sixty-one patients were examined for sensory deficits related to harvest of hamstrings tendons 10 years **after** having had an **anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction**. A neurological examination of the leg was performed to investigate for potential altered sensibility and to quantify the extent of the lesion. The patients answered the **anterior** knee symptoms (AKS) questionnaire and additional questions regarding impact on activities of daily life by any sensory deficit.

RESULTS: Eighty-five per cent of the examined patients had sensory deficits--experienced as numbness (78 %) and paraesthesia (16 %)--distal to the site of tendon harvesting. The mean affected area was 70 (SD 62) cm(2). No patients experienced sensory deficit symptoms to such a degree that it affected their activities of daily life, but the group with sensory deficit had significantly more AKS than patients without sensory deficit, as evaluated by the AKS score (P = 0.02). The most commonly reported complaints were related to strenuous activities and kneeling knee position.

CONCLUSIONS: This **long-term** evaluation shows that sensory deficit **after** hamstring tendons harvesting affects a majority of patients and is probably permanent. Most patients reported this as being only mildly bothersome, but they have significantly more AKS as assessed by the AKS questionnaire. In clinical practice, patients should be counselled prior to tendon harvesting on the incidence and characteristic of the sensory deficit along with other possible peri- and postoperative complications.

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: Case series, Level IV.