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HEALTH & FITNESS

Before you get that MRI...

By [Ron Kaspriske](#)

When doctors suspect a patient might have a serious injury to joints such as the knees or shoulders—things like muscle, tendon or ligament tears—they often use magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to confirm it. Although MRIs are considered extremely effective, a recent study published in BMI Health Services Research found that one out of every five done to detect tears of the medial meniscus in the knee registered a false positive. In other words, if they went solely by the MRI, doctors could prescribe rehabilitation procedures, including surgery, for tears that didn't exist.

Making MRI's even less attractive, and I know this from personal experience, is that many insurance companies are now refusing to cover their costs. That could mean a four-figure expense from your own pocket if you need one.

Since golfers are prime candidates for joint injuries, it's interesting to note that new technology exists to detect tears and soft-tissue damage that is more accurate and cheaper than an MRI. The procedure takes an estimated 10 minutes and you're not stuffed into a claustrophobic's nightmare—an MRI tunnel—to learn whether you need surgery or not.

It's called VisionScope Imaging, and the procedure is covered by many insurance carriers including Medicare. First, a doctor shoots Novocaine into the injured area. Then a needle with a camera is inserted to inspect the damage. In the demonstration on the company's website, a soccer player's knee was inspected in just a minute to render a diagnosis of surgery. The testing is currently being offered by doctors in the Northeast, Chicago and Atlanta but a company spokeswoman says it will eventually be available nationwide.

For more information, visit visionscope-tech.com.