

Training Tip #9

Kneecap Pain: Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome

“I have this grinding sound when I bend my knee.”

“My kneecaps ache after I walk.”

“I can’t squat or kneel anymore.”

“When I sit for a long time and then stand up, I have severe pain all over my knee.”

If you have these symptoms you may have **patellofemoral pain syndrome or runner’s knee**.

Patellofemoral pain can occur from overuse of the knee in sports and activities such as running, walking, jumping or bicycling. The kneecap fits into grooves in the end of the thigh bone (femur) called the femoral condyle. With repeated bending and straightening of the knee, you can irritate the inside surface of the kneecap and cause pain. This syndrome also may result from the way your hips, legs, knees or feet are lined up. If you have wide hips or underdeveloped thigh muscles, are knock-kneed, or have feet with arches that collapse when walking (a condition called overpronation) you may be pulling your kneecap out of its groove and causing your pain.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptom is pain behind the kneecap. You may have pain when you walk, run or sit for a long time. The pain generally is worse when walking downhill or down stairs. Your knee may swell at times. You may feel or hear snapping, popping or grinding in the knee.

How is it treated?

Treatment includes the following:

1. Place an ice pack on your knee for 20 to 30 minutes 3 times a day for 1 week.
2. Elevate your knee by placing a pillow underneath your leg when your knee hurts.
3. Take anti-inflammatory pain medication, such as ibuprofen, as prescribed by your health care provider.
4. When the pain is decreased, start to strengthen your thigh muscles to get the kneecap back in its groove. See exercises below.
5. Infrapatellar strap (a strap placed beneath the kneecap over the patellar tendon) or a neoprene sleeve with a cutout for your kneecap may give you some support.
6. Have your gait checked for overpronation. Arch supports may be necessary. If your symptoms do not improve, seek medical advice.