

Anterior Knee (Patellofemoral) Pain

What is patellofemoral pain?

Patellofemoral pain is a common knee problem. It results in pain that feels as if it is deep behind the knee cap, or just general pain around the knee. The pain can get worse when you're active or when you sit for a long time. It can affect one or both knees.

The exact cause of patellofemoral pain isn't known. It can be due to arthritis and your doctor will check for this. In the absence of arthritis, it probably has something to do with the way your kneecap (patella) moves on the groove of your thigh bone (femur).

What can I do to help my knee?

- Reduce high impact physical activity that such as running, volleyball, or basketball. If you want to keep exercising, try swimming or another low-impact activity. You may want to try working out on nonimpact elliptical trainers, and if you do run, do so on treadmills. As your knees feel better, you can slowly go back to your normal sports. But do this slowly, and increase the amount of time you do the sports activity by only about 10% a week.
- See a good physiotherapist, who will take you through a customised programme suited to your needs. You will be given exercises to do on a regular basis, and some stretching.
- Consider a gait analysis, to see if there are issues relating to the way you walk or run. Alterations in your footwear – often very simple – can be very useful.
- Ice your knees for 10 to 20 minutes after activity. This can ease the pain and speed up healing. To keep your hands free, use an elastic wrap to hold the ice pack in place. A medicine like ibuprofen may also help, but talk to your doctor before you take this medicine.
- If your pain continues, see a specialist, Further tests such as x-rays or a scan may be indicated. Interventions including injection therapies can relieve pain and allow proper rehabilitation to proceed.

Be patient!

Keep exercising to get better. Patellofemoral pain can be hard to treat, and your knees won't get better overnight. Some people are lucky and get better quickly. But it might take many week for your knee to get better. You'll be less likely to get this pain again if you stay in good shape, but don't make sudden changes in your workouts.