Orthopaedic Connection

Knee Pain In Adolescents

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Knee pain in very active young patients is something I see a lot in the office. While several parts of the knee can be the source of the pain, there is usually one thing that is the main cause.

Overuse (the main cause in patients I see)
The adolescent may be playing too hard or too long. Not stretching leg muscles before vigorous activity can be a cause. Not wearing shoes that give proper support is another cause.

What Else Can Cause Adolescent Knee Pain?
While overuse is the main cause, there are others which can combine with overuse to cause pain or these things can be a main cause.
- Direct hit to the knee (bone bruise)
- Injury to kneecap surface inside the knee
- Knock knees
- Osgood-Schlatters
- Patello-femoral pain
- Aching pain along the sides of the kneecap. Very common in girls due to the body changing at the hips which changes the mechanics of the kneecap.

Signs
- Pain develops around the kneecap
- Pain flares with running, jumping and climbing
- Knee may be swollen or tender (mildly)
- Popping sound at times
- Knee buckles or gives way

How I Treat It
- Stop activities temporarily
- Give time to heal – rest
- Ice pack for 15 minutes twice a day
- Advil or similar for inflammation
- Knee sleeve about 6 – 8 inches long
- Gradual return to sports
- Exercises needed for quads and hamstrings
- Call if pain lasts more than 2 – 3 days
- May need shoe inserts

Surgery
I mention it only to say that arthroscopic surgery is very rarely needed! You can rest assured that it is not the first thing I think of in treating knee pain.

I hope this discussion gives you some insight into a common condition of young active adolescents. If untreated it can really keep kids from doing the things they like and should be able to do. My job is to help them to be able to continue to be active and happy.

*My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.*

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Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

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