Orthopaedic Connection

Patellofemoral Pain

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

What is it? Simply stated it is pain in the front of the knee around the knee cap. Doctors often refer to it as anterior knee pain. Describing where it is – that’s the easy part. The origin of patellofemoral pain can be very hard to pinpoint because it can come from a number of causes.

The cause(s) may not be obvious to the doctor when the patient is first seen. In general the cause probably is related to overuse and overloading of the knee cap (patella) as it moves in its groove on the lower end of the thigh bone (femur).

Important point!
Don’t confuse patellofemoral pain with chondromalacia, which is a large word for rough, scratchy changes under the knee cap. This is a different condition that we can discuss later.

Symptoms
- Diffuse aching anterior knee pain
- Worse after prolonged sitting (movie theater sign)
- Climbing stairs causes pain
- Squatting, kneeling
- May develop after increase in activity
- Usually no pre-existing trauma

Tests
There are many tests we use to evaluate anterior knee pain. We don’t need to explain the physical exam so it can be bypassed.

Plain x-rays in several different views are usually sufficient. MRI occasionally has a place in diagnosis of this condition, but the decision to order an MRI should be made by an Orthopaedic Surgeon.

There are several other conditions that need to be considered, but it will get too confusing to list them. It will be better to keep our focus on anterior knee pain.

Treatment
Correct treatment of anterior knee pain can only occur if the diagnosis is correct. So the Orthopaedic Surgeon has to rule out the other possible conditions. When that is done, guess what? The treatment is not surgical in most cases! Nonsurgical treatment is the hallmark of treatment for patellofemoral pain.

- It starts with a Physical Therapy visit
- It is hard to do this on your own with a set of exercises from the internet. This way of treatment usually fails.
- Attention to quads, hamstrings and trunk muscles
- Knee sleeve or brace with an open patella
- McConnell taping laterally
- Short term Tylenol or Ibuprofen
- Weight loss if person is overweight
• Good, **consistent** home program prescribed by a physical therapist is always needed to manage patellofemoral pain

There are many other causes of patellofemoral pain that we can cover in the near future.

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

**Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive**

Wow! Your window to the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal world opens at [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It contains the Website Library of information, Your Orthopaedic Connection and GCH archive of all previous articles.

You will be amazed at all the helpful information it contains.

All of the information pertains to everything I treat in the office and hospital.

Be well.

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