



KNEE PAIN GUIDE

Knee pain is extremely common. In fact, according to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS), approximately 19 million visits were made to physicians' offices due to knee pain in 2003 alone.

Common Causes

The knee is the largest joint in the body and the most easily injured because of the size and frequency of use.

Trauma is a major cause of knee pain and injury. Most knee pain caused by trauma affects the ligaments of the knee, most commonly the medial collateral ligament (MCL). Another frequent injury in the knee is the tearing of the meniscus (two moon-shaped areas of the knee's cartilage). Injury to the ligaments and meniscus are usually caused by a blow to the knee or sudden twist, resulting in a sprain, strain, or tear. Pain, swelling, and difficulty in walking are often the result.

Overuse is one of the most common causes of knee injuries, affecting more people than trauma. Overuse often results in tendinitis (inflammation of the tendons) or bursitis (inflammation of the bursae, the small sacs of synovial fluid that cushion muscles and tendons from bone). These conditions generally occur over time, with pain gradually worsening.

Tendinitis presents as pain in the front of your kneecap or just below it that increases when going up or down stairs.

Bursitis is caused by repeated pressure on the knee. With bursitis the knee is generally swollen,



General Anatomy

The knee is comprised of the patella (kneecap – the primary joint where the upper and lower leg bones meet), the cruciate ligaments (anterior and posterior – ACL & PCL), collateral ligaments (medial and lateral – MCL & LCL), as well as the leg muscles, including the quadriceps, hamstrings, and calf muscles.

most commonly above the knee cap, and pain increases when kneeling or going up or down stairs.

Aging and arthritic changes are another major cause of knee pain. Many people who suffer from arthritis in the knee(s) have limited range of motion, swelling and tenderness that increases with activity. There are two primary forms of arthritis that affect the knee. The most common type is osteoarthritis or “wear-and-tear” arthritis, a non-inflammatory type of arthritis which leads to the degeneration of the cartilage in the knee (eventually leaving the knee bones unprotected). The second type is rheumatoid arthritis, an inflammatory type of arthritis that causes pressure to be exerted on the knee. Rheumatoid arthritis is most often genetic.

Treatment

Minor knee pain may be treated in a variety of ways:

R.I.C.E. (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) is the best combination of treatment for injuries/pain resulting from

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trauma. Rest allows an inflammation caused by acute trauma to subside. Apply ice to the injury every hour (for up to 15 minutes each time) for the first day and at least 4 times daily after that. Keeping your knee elevated will reduce swelling, and wearing a bandage or knee sleeve will provide compression for the injury.

Lifestyle adjustments can make a big difference in your knee pain, as well. Adjusting or eliminating certain activities from your daily routine can make a big change in how you feel. For example, try walking instead of running or using a knee pad when having to kneel to work.

Pain that worsens or is due to a more serious condition should be diagnosed and treated by a medical professional.

The Next Step

For most people, our legs get us where we need to go. If you experience pain in your knees, even during simple activities, your daily life will be adversely affected. Seek help! Our physical therapist can help to put you on the path to freedom from pain by helping you increase your strength, regain mobility, and return you to your pre-injury activity level.

You don't have to live with knee pain. At **Idaho Physical Therapy**, our caring, professional, experienced therapists can help you achieve the fastest, most complete recovery possible. Call us today to book your free assessment - **(208) 463-0022!**

