

KNEE PAIN?

Do your knees hurt? Do you feel pain around your kneecap when going downstairs, while squatting or if you sit for a while?

You may possibly be suffering from a condition called patello-femoral syndrome. In this condition, there is excessive rubbing of the cartilage underneath the kneecap in relation to the long bone of the thigh, called the femur. This rubbing may accelerate the degenerative changes in the cartilage.

This condition may come on suddenly or the onset may be gradual, developing over a period of several weeks or months. The pain may appear following trauma to the leg, following knee surgery or simply via compensation for a problem that exists elsewhere in the lower extremity. The pain may also appear after the onset of a new activity or a training régime that is too vigorous. In this case, the pain is usually proportional to the intensity of the activity. This syndrome is sometimes associated with cracking under the kneecap and swelling around the knee.

Pain that is felt in the front part of the knee is often due to muscle imbalance. The common pattern of imbalance is weakness of the inner part of the quadriceps muscle in the front of the thigh along with a lack of flexibility of the hamstring muscles at the back of the thigh, as well as the Iliotibial band on the outside of the thigh. All of these structures affect the position of the kneecap as it moves, altering the biomechanics of the knee. In addition, weakness of the gluteal muscles in the buttock may change the alignment of the kneecap and contribute to pain.

Evaluation by a physiotherapist involves a detailed examination of the whole lower extremity in order to identify the various factors that can affect the alignment of your kneecap. He/she will also examine your lower back, your hips, your feet and your knees as well as perform a detailed assessment of the muscular system. In the case of patello-femoral problems, treatment will consist of mobilizing and stretching tight structures and muscles that can affect the kneecap, improving posture in order to achieve optimal alignment and strengthening the weak muscles of the legs. Short-term use of taping may be used around the kneecap in order to help improve its alignment, and occasionally the use of orthotics may be suggested. In addition, you will receive useful information and ‘tidbits’ on proper training techniques so that you may avoid injury.