

Anterior Knee Pain

Information for patients

What is Anterior Knee Pain?

Anterior Knee Pain is pain felt around your kneecap. It is usually felt around the front of the knee although at times it can spread to the sides and occasionally to the back of the knee. Anterior knee pain is usually triggered following a recent growth spurt, a change in sport or increase in training. This causes an increased loading of your knee joint and pain can occur. A sudden increase in activity levels may also stress the area and the pain is nature's way of protecting the kneecap from overuse and damage.

What are the common symptoms?

The most common symptoms of anterior knee pain are:

- Knee pain either during or after taking part in sports, prolonged walking and/or walking up and down stairs
- Generalised pain and sometimes tenderness around your knee cap
- Reduced knee strength
- Tightness with reduced flexibility of your leg muscles.

These symptoms usually appear gradually and can appear in one or both of your knees.

Treatment advice

By following **all** of the advice below your knee pain should reduce;

- Reduce painful activities until the pain and swelling settle, the amount you need to reduce will vary from person to person. It is very important to stay active though so please continue with activities which do not flare up your pain such as swimming and cycling.
- Place some crushed ice in a damp towel and place this on the painful area for 10 minutes. Please check your skin regularly during this time and have regular breaks from the ice pack. Repeat this ice application every 2–3 hours as needed.
- Start the stretching and strengthening programme in this leaflet daily to improve your muscle strength and flexibility.

1. Lie face down.

Bend your painful knee back and place your hand around your ankle. Pull your heel slowly towards your bottom until you feel the stretching on the front of your thigh.

Hold for 30 seconds and then relax.

Repeat 3 times in a row, daily.



2. Sit on the floor with your non-painful leg straight and the painful leg crossed over it as shown.

Bring your painful knee towards your opposite shoulder until you feel a gentle stretch in your buttock. Hold for 30 seconds and then relax.

Repeat 3 times in a row, daily.



3. Lie on your back and lift your painful leg towards your chest. Place your hands behind your knee as shown.

Gently straighten your knee until you feel a gentle stretch behind your thigh. Hold for 30 seconds and then relax.

Repeat 3 times in a row, daily.



4. Lie on your back with your knees bent.

Squeeze your buttocks together and lift your bottom off the floor pushing through your heels rather than your whole foot. Hold for 10 seconds and then return to starting position.

Repeat 10 times daily.



Further treatment advice

Other advice that may help your knee pain is:

- Avoid sitting with your knees bent with your legs folded under you. Try sitting with your legs straight out in front of you instead.
- Try stay fit, healthy and move regularly. It is important to eat healthily and follow the recommended daily exercise guidance of 30 minutes activity each day.
- Shock absorbing footwear such as trainers that have been designed for this purpose can help to ease the loading and stress on your knee cap.
- Pain relief can help if your pain is really bothering you – please contact your pharmacist for advice around what to take.
- Stay positive – patella-femoral pain can be frustrating and take a long time to settle. It is safe to continue being active despite your pain.

Returning to activities

Once your knee pain has decreased and the flexibility/strength of your leg is improving you should gradually return to normal activities.

This often has to be a flexible process as some days your knee may feel better than others.

It is ok to exercise when you still have a little bit of pain but only if your pain settles quickly after you finish exercising.

Further advice

If you have followed all of the advice above and you are still struggling with your symptoms you can contact the physiotherapy department on details below.

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Therapies Department,
Royal Hospital for Children and Young People,
50 Little France Crescent
Edinburgh
EH16 4SA

Telephone 0131 312 1079