

# Osgood-Schlatter's Disease

## What is Osgood Schlatter's Disease?

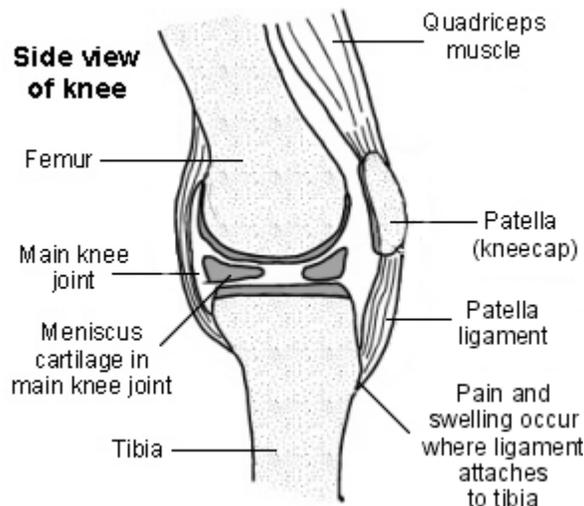
Osgood-Schlatter's disease usually occurs in teenagers. It causes pain and swelling just below the knee. It is named after the two people who first described it. Although uncomfortable it is not serious and usually goes away in time.

## Who gets Osgood-Schlatter's disease?

Young teenagers, particularly boys, are the most commonly affected. It is uncommon over the age of 16. It is most common in teenagers who play a lot of sport involving kicking, running, or jumping. These kinds of sports cause repeated and vigorous use of the quadriceps muscles.

## What are the symptoms?

The main symptom is pain just below the kneecap (patella).



The severity of the pain tends to flare up and down. It is usually worse during, and just after activity. It tends to ease with rest. The pain typically lasts a few months, but sometimes persists until you have finished growing. The knee joint is not affected, so knee movements are normal, but they can be stiff and uncomfortable.

A small, tender, bony bump may develop a few centimetres below the kneecap. This occurs where the patella ligament attaches to the tibia ('shin bone'). The small bump is permanent, although in time it becomes painless. No special tests are required as the diagnosis is often clearly identified from the symptoms.

## **What causes Osgood-Schlatter's disease?**

Sometimes it develops for no apparent reason. However, overuse of the front thigh muscles (quadriceps) is thought to be a common cause. The quadriceps muscle is used to straighten the knee. This muscle pulls on the patella, which pulls on the patella ligament, this is attached to the upper part of the tibia.

Overuse of the quadriceps muscle can cause repeated stress and strain on the attachment of the patella ligament to the growing tibia. This can cause inflammation and pain at the site of the ligament attachment. In some cases, a small flake of bone is pulled off the tibia by the pulling ligament. Healing bone (callus) then forms which may cause a hard bony bump to develop.

## **How is Osgood-Schlatter's disease treated?**

- The pain usually goes within a few months without requiring any formal treatment. It is not considered to be a serious medical condition.
- Paracetamol or similar painkillers are useful when pain flares up.
- If symptoms persist for 2 years or more, immobilisation in a plaster cast to 'ensure' rest may be recommended. On rare occasions, a surgeon may opt to remove the bony bump if symptoms persist

## **What about playing sport and other activities?**

Sport or physical activity is not likely to cause any permanent damage, but may make the pain worse. However, it is often sporty teenagers who develop Osgood-Schlatter's disease.

Difficult decisions may have to be made about training schedules and sporting commitments. Each patient is individual, and your doctor will advise a suggested management plan. An approach similar to the following may be advised:

- You do not usually need to stop sport. However, easing off strenuous or vigorous sport may be sensible for a while until the pain eases to a tolerable level. Let the pain be your guide. Play sport only to a bearable level of pain. Avoid heavy sport activities if the pain is bad. Consider a complete break from sport for a while if pain remains bad.
- An ice pack applied below the kneecap for about 5 minutes before and after exercise may prevent some inflammation and pain.