

Patellar tendonitis

A parent's guide to signs, symptoms, treatment, and prevention.



The patellar tendon connects the kneecap (patella) to your shinbone (tibia). Tendonitis occurs when there is inflammation of the tendons, usually due to overuse. Most people with tendonitis will complain of a dull, achy pain. The patellar tendon, an extension of the quadriceps muscle group, helps your knee extend and push off the ground when your knee is bent.

Symptoms

The main symptom of patellar tendonitis is pain and/or tenderness on the front of the knee, just below the kneecap, where the patella attaches to the shinbone. While exercising, pain can be sharp; after exercise, an aching pain can persist; mild swelling in the kneecap can occasionally occur.

Causes

Patellar tendonitis is often the result of repetitive motion, typically seen in jumping activities such as volleyball or basketball, but also seen in repetitive activities such as running or soccer. Tight hamstrings and quadriceps can place additional strain on the patellar tendon. Training too much, too quickly, without proper recovery time between workouts can also cause patellar tendonitis.

Treatment

Treatment for patellar tendonitis includes icing, stretching, and strengthening.

- You should ice the knee for 15-20 minutes every three to four hours in the initial stages of the injury. Your doctor may also prescribe anti-inflammatories to assist with alleviating pain and swelling, and refer you to a physical therapist to assist in developing a comprehensive program including stretching, strengthening, and modalities (ice and heat) to address any biomechanical deficit that may be contributing to the tendonitis.
- Rest is important for recovery. If the tendonitis is not given time to heal, it is possible for the tendon to rupture, requiring surgery.
- Even after the pain subsides, continue stretching exercises as part of your normal workout routine.

Prevention

Always make sure your hamstrings and quadriceps are stretched before exercising; it eases the movement of the patella as your knee bends and extends. Being overweight places additional stress on your knee joint and ligaments. Avoid practicing on hard surfaces when practical and ensure that your footwear has proper support.

Stretching

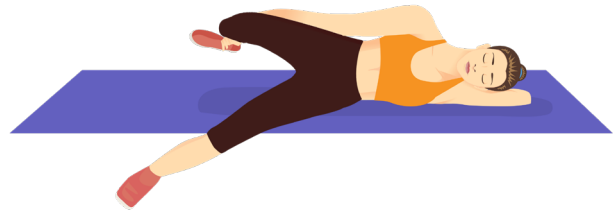
Quads stretch in standing

Use a chair or table for balance. Take your heel towards your bottom, keeping your knees together and your back straight until you feel a stretch in the front of your thigh. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat four times at a mild to moderate pain-free stretch.



Quads stretch side lying

Lie down on your side with your shoulders, hips, and knees in a straight line. You can choose where you place your bottom arm – wherever feels most comfortable. Bring your heel towards your bottom, pulling at the ankle until you feel a stretch in the front of your thigh. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat three times, twice daily, or before and after exercise.



Lying quads stretch

Lie flat down on your tummy. Bring your heel towards your bottom pulling at the ankle until you feel a stretch in the front of your thigh. If you can't reach your ankle, place a band or belt around your ankle and use that as shown in the picture. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat three times, twice daily, or before and after exercise.



Cross friction massage

With two fingers, rub over the painful area with pressure, this should be uncomfortable, but not terribly painful. This should be done for five to seven minutes, twice daily.

Ice massage

Freeze water in a Dixie® cup, tear top of cup off and use directly on painful area for seven to 10 minutes, twice daily.

SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSM Health ministries implemented enhanced safety measures, which are evaluated periodically based on COVID-19 transmission numbers. To ensure your protection and that of others, we continue to require face masks upon entry along with ministry-specific screening processes.