Knee pain or tenderness may be caused by a sudden, traumatic injury, overuse, or an underlying condition like arthritis. Knee pain can range anywhere from dull and achy to sharp and stabbing, depending on the cause.

Tendonitis
Tendonitis is the inflammation of the tendons, usually due to overuse. Tendons are the soft tissues attaching muscle to bone. In the knee, the patellar tendon is an extension of the quadriceps muscle group, and it connects the kneecap (patella) to the shin bone (tibia). People who have patellar tendonitis often complain of pain and/or tenderness in the front of the knee, sometimes accompanied by swelling, just below the kneecap.

Treatment
• Ice the knee for 15-20 minutes every few hours when the injury first begins.
• Anti-inflammatory medications such as naproxen and ibuprofen.
• Rest
• Proper warm up and cool down sometimes physical therapy can be helpful.

Ligamentous Injuries
The knee is made up of four major ligaments: the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), posterior cruciate ligament (PCL), medial collateral ligament (MCL), and lateral collateral ligament (LCL). These ligaments can be sprained during activities. A full tear or partial tear of these ligaments are all reason to seek medical attention for further evaluation. A tear of these ligaments may be accompanied by a “pop,” knee swelling, pain when bearing weight, and a “giving way” sensation when walking. Many times surgical intervention may be needed when these ligaments fully tear.

First Aid
• Take weight off the injured limb
• Elevate the joint (above the level of the heart)
• Ice
• Pain relievers such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (like ibuprofen and naproxen)

Meniscal Injury
One of the most common injuries in the knee is a meniscal tear. The menisci are the two pieces of cartilage in the knee between the thighbone (femur) and the shinbone (tibia). The menisci provide cushion between the two bones. When the knee is forcibly twisted or rotated, these pieces of cartilage can tear. If a meniscal tear is suspected, it is important to see an orthopedic surgeon to determine the most appropriate treatment.

Signs and Symptoms
• Pain in the knee joint – this can be on the inside or outside of the knee
• Swelling in the knee joint
• Stiffness
• A “clicking” or “popping” sensation when walking

Arthritis
Arthritis in the knee is most common in people 50+ years of age, although it can occur in the younger population as well. Arthritis occurs when cartilage in the knees wear down over time. People with arthritis may complain of joint stiffness, cracking, swelling, tenderness and sometimes deformities in the joint. Arthritis is diagnosed after an X-ray shows degeneration of the cartilage in the joint.

Treatment can include physical therapy, weight loss, ice, heat, medications and joint replacement.