

osgood-schlatter disease

Osgood-Schlatter disease is a painful knee problem of active young people. It is more common in boys than girls. It typically affects boys 12-15 years of age and girls 8-12 years of age, but occasionally younger children can be affected. It can affect one knee or both knees.

what is the cause?

Repetitive stress on the growth area just below the knee (tibial tubercle apophysis) causes inflammation in the bone leading to pain. The patellar tendon attaches to this growth area causing stress when the knee is used in extension. This condition is very common with overuse in jumping sports, such as basketball, volleyball, or sprinting.

what are the symptoms?

Patients typically complain of pain in the front of the knee just below the knee cap. Pain usually increases with sports activities, stairs, and sometimes kneeling. A small bump or area of swelling may develop below the knee cap. It can be tender to touch in this area. Pain typically improves with rest from activities, but may become severe enough to limit activities or cause persistent painful weightbearing.

diagnosis

A physical exam is usually all that is necessary for diagnosis. Knee X-rays are typically performed to rule out fracture or other causes of pain. Fragmentation of the growth plate can occasionally be seen. Further imaging such as an MRI is not necessary.

treatment

The goal of treatment is to return your child to his/her sport or activity as soon as possible. The primary treatment is rest with ice and an anti-inflammatory medicine (such as ibuprofen). Some sports may be tolerated better than others, such as swimming. A patellar strap can be helpful in reducing tension on the growth plate. Your provider can review helpful exercises, such as quadriceps stretching. Formal physical therapy may even be prescribed. Occasionally, when pain is severe or cannot be managed by conservative treatment your child may require immobilization in a knee immobilizer or cast.

This condition may briefly slow your child down. But 90 percent of patients have complete healing and resolution of pain with self-care. It is important that your child rest his/her knee. Rest speeds healing and can keep the problem from worsening. Your child should have a gradual return to activities and rest if pain returns.

