

KNEE INJURIES

PART 1

CHONDROMALACIA

PATELLA

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A frequently seen cause of knee pain is Chondromalacia Patella. The patella, or kneecap, is a bone which lies within the quadriceps tendon as it inserts below the knee. On the underneath surface of the patella lays cartilage, which forms a cushion between the bones making up the knee joint. Abnormal stress or friction between the patella and underlying knee results in an inflammatory condition of the cartilage. Inflammation leads to cartilage softening, erosion and fragmentation.

The person with Chondromalacia Patella often complains of an aching pain behind the kneecap, usually made worse by bending at the knees. Knee pain and stiffness generally becomes worse with long periods of sitting. Activities that involve repetitive flexing and extending of the leg may cause a grinding feeling and produce pain under the kneecap.

Chondromalacia can be caused by a direct blow to the knee, as with a fall, altering the normal tracking of the kneecap. Tracking friction as the patella moves over the knee joint may also be the result of uneven quadriceps muscle strength, functional abnormalities of the foot and/or leg or a condition in which the patella rides too high in its groove over the knee.

Treatment of Chondromalacia Patella should include controlling pain and inflammation with ice massage. Structural or functional abnormalities in the leg and feet should be corrected by orthotics, modified training and/or corrective manipulation; this is important because chondromalacia is often an associated finding in relation to other knee problems, such as subluxation and instability. The leg muscles need to be stretched to reduce increased tension upon the knee. Terminal leg extension exercises tend to improve tracking and stability. The athlete may also find activity more comfortable wearing a neoprene knee support.

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