

Runner's Knee | Patellofemoral Pain

What is it?

Runner's knee, or patellofemoral pain, is a painful, temporary condition of the knee. As the name suggests it is very common in runners, though it can occur in non-runners as well. People with runner's knee typically experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- Pain around or behind the kneecap.
- Pain walking up or down stairs.
- Pain when sitting down for long periods of time.
- Popping, crunching, or grinding sensations inside the knee.

Natural History

People can experience runner's knee pain due to a variety of lifestyle and biomechanical issues that can cause the patella to track incorrectly in the kneecap groove. This temporary problem with tracking irritates and sometimes wears down the kneecap cartilage, which can cause the cartilage to become rough instead of smooth. This rough cartilage rubbing together sometimes causes crunching, grinding sensations when bending the knee, as well as inflammation and pain. The most common causes of runner's knee are:

- Overuse
- A change in exercise routine (such as adding more time/distance, hills, a new sport, etc.)
- Flat feet
- Malalignment
- Direct trauma to the knee
- Tight iliotibial band (IT band) and quadriceps muscle

Treatment Options

The treatment for patellofemoral pain is generally a combination of anti-inflammatory medications, rest, and, most importantly, physical therapy. Physical therapy is useful for stretching and strengthening the muscles that support the kneecap and help it track correctly.

For a list of physical therapy exercises to start your recovery, visit

<http://millsteinorthopedics.com/treatments/rehabilitation/>

Additionally, if you have very flat feet, it may be recommended that you purchase a good pair of full-length orthotics in order to support the arch and properly align the leg. Although patellofemoral pain can linger and be frustrating, it is almost always temporary and can be resolved with non-invasive treatments and rest from aggravating activities.