

Osgood-Schlatter Disease

Osgood-Schlatter disease is a condition causing pain just under the kneecap, not in the knee joint. It occurs most commonly in children who play sports, mainly in the preteen and teen years. The pain usually goes away by the time your child is done growing. We may recommend that your child temporarily reduce sports activity.

What is Osgood-Schlatter disease?

Osgood-Schlatter disease is a problem caused by irritation of the growing bony bump (tibial tubercle) just below the knee, where one of the powerful knee tendons is attached to the bone. The most common cause of irritation is your child's participation in frequent sports or other activities. Osgood-Schlatter disease is a common cause of knee pain in children and teens.

What does it look like?

- The main symptom of Osgood-Schlatter disease is pain just below the knee. The bony bump under the knee may be tender and swollen.
- Pain usually starts after your child has been playing sports or other activities. Once he or she rests for a while, the pain goes away. Pain may be present in one or both knees.
- Osgood-Schlatter disease is most common in children in their early teens who play sports involving sprinting and jumping, such as football, basketball, soccer, gymnastics, or ballet.
- Girls are most likely to have Osgood-Schlatter disease between 8 and 14 years and boys between 10 and 15 years. The problem is more common in boys, but this may change as more girls play sports.

What causes Osgood-Schlatter disease?

The condition is felt to be caused by irritation and tiny fractures (very small breaks) in the bony bump (called "tibial tubercle") below the knee. A tendon from the knee attaches at the bump and pulls on the bone (which can cause the problem) when the child is active. This type of damage

most often occurs in active children, especially those who frequently play organized sports.

What are some possible complications of Osgood-Schlatter disease?

- For most children, Osgood-Schlatter disease causes no lasting problems: the pain goes away by the time your child is done growing.
- Surgery is rarely needed but may be considered if problems with Osgood-Schlatter continue.

How is Osgood-Schlatter disease treated?

- Rest or reduced activity is the main treatment for knee pain caused by Osgood-Schlatter disease. Your child may have to reduce playing sports and other activities that aggravate the knee pain, such as playing basketball or climbing stairs.
- If the pain is mild, reduced activity may be the only treatment needed.
- For more severe pain, give your child pain relievers or anti-inflammatory drugs (such as ibuprofen) or ice packs.
- A program of stretching the leg muscles and strengthening the quadriceps muscles (the muscles of the front of the thigh) may be recommended.
- Wearing a pad under the knee may help keep the area from becoming irritated.
- If knee pain becomes more severe and persistent, your child may have to stop playing sports for a while. Rarely, a knee immobilizer or cast may be used. After several weeks, your child can gradually resume sports activities.
- Even if your child's Osgood-Schlatter disease is mild, it may take a year or longer for knee pain to go away completely.

When should I call your office?

Call our office if:

- Your child continues to have significant knee pain despite treatment.
- Your child develops severe pain or swelling of the knee.
- Your child starts limping.