

What is Osgood-Schlatter disease?

- Osgood-Schlatter disease is a common childhood condition.
- It causes knee pain in children and teens.

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What causes it?

- Osgood-Schlatter disease is caused by strain on the knees from lots of activities.
- Common activities that can lead to the condition include running, football, basketball, volleyball, soccer, skating, gymnastics, and ballet.
- When strain is put on the knee, the muscles around the kneecap can be pulled.
- Sometimes, the strain can cause a tiny fracture in the shinbone.
- The condition usually develops after a period of time when the knees have been under a lot of strain.
- Sometimes, the condition can be caused by a single event.

Who can get it?

- It is a childhood condition.
- It is most common in older children and teens who play sports.
- It is slightly more common in boys.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- The most common symptom is pain and swelling below the knee at the top of the shinbone.
- The swelled area may be tender (hurts to touch). It may be red and warm.
- The swelled area may feel like a bony bump.
- Pain can be mild to severe.
- Pain may last only while your child is playing the sport or it may be painful for your child to do any physical activity.
- The child may limp after physical activity.
- The pain often goes away when the child is resting.
- Only one knee is usually sore, but some children have pain in both knees.
- Symptoms usually appear in puberty when teens are having a growth spurt.
- A growth spurt is when a child grows at a faster rate than she had in the past.

How is it treated?

- The doctor will want your child's medical history. It is important to tell the doctor her physical activities, how often she does them and for how long, and symptoms of her pain.
- The doctor will look at the knee to see if it is swollen and red and see how well the child can move it.
- Regular X-rays or special X-rays like an MRI may be needed. These tests help the doctor see what is happening inside around the knee.
- Treatment depends on how bad the condition is. Doctors usually recommend doing less bending and jumping.
- The doctor might recommend that the child take time off from the sport that is most likely causing the pain.
- The child may be asked to rest from all physical activities (as long as 2-4 months) until she is better.
- She may need to take time off from sports as long as 2 to 4 months.
- In some cases, the child may need to wear a brace or cast for 6 to 8 weeks. She may need to use crutches.
- After the brace or cast is off, special doctors can help her do exercises to make the leg muscles stronger.
- Surgery is rarely needed.
- If your child really enjoys sports, she may not want to take time off. She may try to play even if she is in pain. Taking a break is best, though. If she doesn't take a break, the condition is likely to get worse.
- If your child's knee is swollen or painful, icing it may help. Do not put ice directly on the skin. Cover it with a towel. Put ice on for 10 minutes, then off for 10 minutes.
- Taking ibuprofen (such as Advil) may help relieve pain.

- Your child can return to sports slowly as pain allows.

How long does it last?

- The condition usually goes away on its own over time but it may take months or years.
- It is usually better by the time the teen's growth spurt ends.
- Some people who had Osgood-Schlatter disease as teens have pain as adults when they kneel.

Can it be prevented?

- Stretching the leg muscles before and after activities may help.
- To prevent making the condition worse, take time off from activities that place strain on the knees.

When should I call the doctor?

- Call the doctor if your child has symptoms of Osgood-Schlatter disease.
- Call the doctor if you have questions or concerns about your child's condition.
- Call the doctor if you have questions about treatment.

Quick Answers

- Osgood-Schlatter disease is a common childhood condition that causes knee pain.
- It is caused by strain on the knees.
- It is most common in older children and teens who play sports.
- The most common symptom is pain and swelling below the knee.
- Doctors usually recommend doing less bending and jumping. Your child may need to stop doing certain physical activities for a time.
- The condition usually gets better by the time the teen's growth spurt ends.
- To prevent making the condition worse, take time off from activities that place strain on the knees.
- Call the doctor if you have questions or concerns.

References

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