

Osgood-Schlatter Disease

Chris is about to take part in his first soccer championship. Lately, though, he's had swelling, tenderness, and aching pain beneath his right knee joint. He seems to feel better when he takes a break from sports and other physical activities for a few days.

After visiting his doctor, Chris discovered that he has a condition called Osgood-Schlatter disease (OSD), a common cause of knee pain in teens. The condition most often affects guys between 13 and 14 years old and girls between 10 and 11 years old.

What Is Osgood-Schlatter Disease?



What Is a Growth Spurt?

For about 2 years during adolescence, guys and girls grow more rapidly. This rapid growth period is often called a growth spurt. Although all people go through this spurt in height, the age at which it begins and the length of time it continues vary.

In 1903, doctors Robert Osgood and Carl Schlatler first described OSD after recognizing a pattern of symptoms in their patients. The doctors found that OSD was a growth-related problem seen mostly in young, athletic guys. It's more likely to happen during a **growth spurt**.

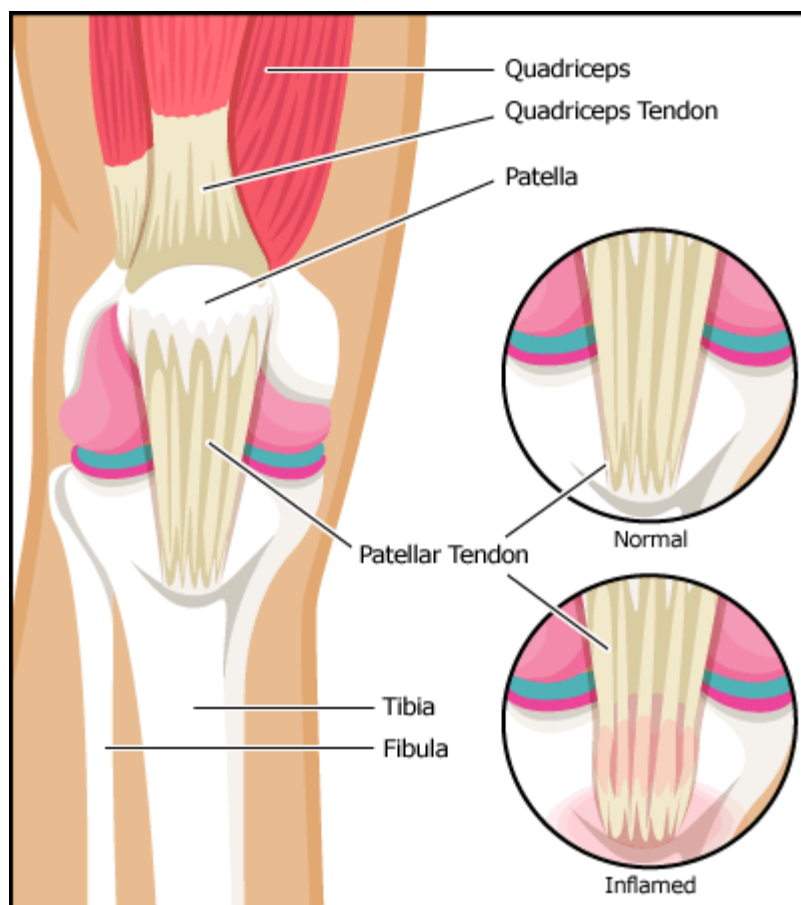
Osgood-Schlatter disease is an **overuse injury** of the knee. Frequent use and physical stress cause inflammation (pain and swelling) at the point where the tendon from the kneecap (called the patella) attaches to the shinbone (tibia).

Because the area is stressed by frequent use, it often leads to inflammation (pain and swelling) or even a tiny fracture of the shin bone. The pain usually worsens with exercise, jumping, and sports such as basketball, volleyball, soccer, figure skating, and gymnastics.

In some people, both knees are affected. The condition affects guys more than girls, especially guys who are active in sports involving deep knee bends, jumping, and running. But OSD affects girls, too, and the number of girls with OSD is increasing since more and more girls are participating in competitive sports.

Signs and Symptoms of OSD The symptoms of OSD include:

- pain, swelling, or tenderness below the knee
 - pain that becomes worse during activities such as running and jumping
 - limping after physical activity
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With OSD, these symptoms usually go away or feel better when a person rests.

OSD can cause very different symptoms in different people; it all depends on the severity of the condition. Some people may feel mild knee pain only when they play sports. Others may feel constant pain that makes playing any sport difficult.

What Do Doctors Do?

If a doctor thinks someone has OSD, he or she will examine the knee carefully and might take an X-ray to help find the cause of pain. In addition to doing a physical examination, the doctor probably will ask about any concerns and symptoms you have, your past health, your family's health, any medications you're taking, any allergies you may have, and other

issues. This is called the medical history.

Most people with OSD are able to continue playing sports. If someone's pain is severe, the doctor might recommend taking a short break or trying activities with less jumping and running for a while. Ask your doctor about stretching exercises that can help relieve some of the pain while keeping the area strong and toned. These exercises often include quadriceps and hamstring stretches.

Icing the affected area after sports can help to relieve pain and swelling. A doctor might also prescribe anti-inflammatory medications, like ibuprofen, to treat the pain.

The good news is that OSD usually goes away on its own after the growth spurt has ended.

Reviewed by: Peter G. Gabos, MD

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