

## Osgood-Schlatter Disease

**O**sgood-Schlatter disease, named for the doctors who first described it, mainly affects children between the ages of 9 and 13. It can develop when bone begins forming on the tibial tubercle, which is the little knob just below the front of the kneecap. The large, quadriceps muscles attach to this portion of the leg by means of the patellar tendon. These are the muscles that allow the leg to be able to straighten and extend. This tubercle, therefore, is important for normal leg functioning.

During rapid growth, and especially in active and athletic preteens and teenagers, the tubercle gets a real workout as the big muscles pull against it. In Osgood-Schlatter disease, the tubercle swells and creates a lumpy area below the knee, which can be very painful during and after running or jumping. X-rays often show tiny cracks in this bony tubercle. Fortunately, these cracks will eventually heal, and the pain will disappear when the child stops growing—usually between the ages of 14 and 17. When the bone growth stops, a slightly knobby knee is the only residual damage left from Osgood-Schlatter disease.

Young people with Osgood-Schlatter disease should not do deep knee bends or squats, especially with weights, as this puts tremendous strain on the tubercle. They should not play the catcher position in baseball or softball, and probably shouldn't participate in any sports that involve jumping. They can participate in activities that don't cause excessive or prolonged pain, such as swimming. If pain becomes severe, the child with Osgood-Schlatter disease may have to withdraw from competition or refrain from heavy physical activity that puts strain on the knees.

Treatment for Osgood-Schlatter disease consists mainly of simple procedures you can help your child with at home. After exercise, apply ice packs to the area for ten minutes every hour for the first 72 hours of pain and, if the pain continues, three times a day after. A warm pack at bedtime applied for 20 minutes with the leg elevated to prevent swelling can be soothing and promote good blood flow. Ibuprofen (such as Motrin) or acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) may also help relieve any pain. Never give aspirin to anyone under 20.

Toning the quadriceps and the hamstring muscles (which are in the back of the thigh) with straight leg exercises can sometimes help decrease strain on the patellar tendon. Also, gently holding stretches of these muscles for a minute at a time several times a day, after exercise can help. Make sure your child knows to stretch slowly, and in a controlled—not bouncing—fashion. The stretch should be held until he or she feels a slight pull—but never to the point of pain. Illustrations of these stretches are in the *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook* or can be found in any book on stretching.

If you're concerned that your child might have Osgood-Schlatter disease, you can call your medical professional for more information. Knee braces may be recommended for the short term, but if used excessively, braces can weaken muscles and ligaments and throw off a normal walking stride. Your doctor or medical professional may be able to give you advice, but keep in mind the only cure for Osgood-Schlatter disease is for the child to naturally grow and develop fully.

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**For more health information ...**

- Connect to our Web site at *members.kp.org*
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Visit your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.

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