

Anterior knee pain

What is anterior knee pain?

This is general pain around the front of the knee. The pain often happens gradually, after or during activity which requires the knee bending and straightening repetitively.



What causes it?

Anterior knee pain may be caused by:

- Falling or being hit on the knee.
- Repeated movements that cause too much pressure, like jumping, climbing stairs, kneeling or deep knee bends.
- A decrease in the padding for the bone, called cartilage, on the back of the kneecap.
- The alignment of the leg between the hip and ankle.
- An imbalance of the thigh muscles.

How will it affect my child?

- The pain often gets worse with activity.
- Climbing stairs puts a lot of force on the knee joint and can cause pain. Sitting too long in one place might make the knee feel stiff and painful.
- Your child may have pain at night.
- Your child may feel like the knee gives way (buckles) or catches (locks). This is not common.
- The knee may grind, click or pop, especially when bending or straightening the knee.

What tests are needed?

Your healthcare provider will review your child's activities and do an exam:

- The doctor will look to see how flexible the leg is, how well it moves and which movements cause pain. This helps rule out more serious conditions of the knee joint.
- X-rays may be needed if your child has had pain for a long period of time or if there are signs and symptoms of another condition.

How is the pain treated?

Pain medicine, decreased activity, rest, icing, and/or physical therapy of the knee may help with pain and swelling. Other treatments may include:

- Icing. Use a bag of crushed ice, or frozen peas or corn. You can reuse these items as an ice pack. **Do not eat** the corn or peas once they have been used as an ice pack.
 - Put a towel between skin and bag. If you put the ice pack directly on the skin, it may cause frost bite. Put the bag on the sore area.
 - Leave on for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Your child should not kneel, do deep squats, go up and down stairs, or sit with bent knees for long periods of time.
- Your child's activities may need to be changed. Your child may not be allowed to climb stairs or run on hills. Your child may need to cut back on sports or activities for a while. Training may need to be modified. It is rare that all activities must be stopped.
- Your child will learn special exercises in physical therapy. These exercises will help make the leg stronger. Anterior knee pain does not normally go away until the knee is stronger. If your child's activity or ability to do the special exercises is severely limited because of pain, other physical therapy treatment may be needed.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Get worse or if pain medicine is needed more than 2 or 3 times a week.
- Does not get better with rest and less activity.
- Does not get better with the pain medicine.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

For more health and wellness information, check out this resource:

<https://kidshealth.org/ChildrensWi/en/parents>

This document was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.