

Runner's Knee

Runner's knee is a very common knee complaint, typically (but not only) in people that are active or involved in sports that require a lot of running. It is more of an 'umbrella' term for pain that is felt around and/or under the kneecap.

Causes –

Normally when you bend your knee, your kneecap glides smoothly up and down a groove. For cases of runner's knee, the kneecap does not slide normally through that groove. It 'mal-tracks' and gets pulled to one side.

This can be caused by :

- *Uneven muscle strength in the thigh*
If the outer thigh muscle gets too strong and the muscle on the inside of the thigh is too weak, it can pull your kneecap out to the side.
- *Tightness of the iliotibial band (ITB)*
If this band becomes too tight, it can also pull your kneecap to the side causing mal-tracking.
- *Flat feet*
Having flat feet can cause your ankle to roll in. This causes the shin bone to rotate, in turn affecting your knee and contributing to mal-tracking.
- *Weak outer hip muscles*
Muscle imbalance at the hip can rotate the thigh bone, in turn affecting your knee and contributing to mal-tracking.

Symptoms –

You may have some or all of the following symptoms.

- Gradual onset of pain around the kneecap
- A pain on the inside of the kneecap, around the underside of the knee and sometimes the outside of the knee.
- Pain with activities such as squatting, lunging, hopping, walking, running
- Pain when going up stairs
- Pain with kneeling
- Pain with sustained bending of the knee i.e. sitting for a long time
- As your knee worsens, it may become sore even when resting

Treatment –

In order to help reduce your pain and prevent worsening of your problem, try the following at home right away :

- Rest – try and avoid the activities that bring on the pain
- Ice 10minutes 2x day to the painful area if your pain is severe
- If sitting with your knee bent for long periods of time (e.g. in a meeting or at the movies etc), gently bend and straighten your knee while sitting 10x every 30minutes. This aims to help reduce stiffness in your knee
- In addition, gently straighten and bend your knee every morning and night. Lay on your back on the floor or in bed, slide your heel toward your bottom (bending your knee) and then away from your bottom (straightening your knee). Repeat 10x. Stop if painful

In the event that you do require physiotherapy, you can expect some or all of the following treatments :

- Deep tissue massage and trigger point therapy
- Acupuncture/ dry needling
- Cupping
- Ultrasound treatment
- Mobilisations to your patella (knee cap)
- Stretching tight muscles
- Taping to your knee for support and pain relief
- Taping to your foot for pain relief or to determine its involvement with your knee
- Strengthening weak muscles
- Home exercise program to help prevent reoccurrence
- Prescription of orthotics if your feet are found to be contributing your knee

When to seek help –

It is time to see the physio if any of the following are true:

- You have pain even at rest
- Your knee is affecting your day-to-day activities
- Your knee is stopping you from your hobbies, leisure activities or work
- You are not performing at your best during sport as a result of knee pain
- You have knee pain that is affecting your sleep