

Patellofemoral Stress Syndrome or Patellofemoral Pain

Sarah Paulson
Physical Therapy Student
Andover Physical Therapy

Do you have a dull ache in the center of your knee, especially after activity? Do you have tenderness on the outside of your kneecap, or do you have swelling around your knee? If you do, you may have patellofemoral stress syndrome or patellofemoral pain.

The knee joint is complex with many muscles, ligaments, and bones. All of these parts need to work in balance of one another to allow the joint to work at its optimal level. When these parts work in unison the kneecap or patella will track up and down along a groove in the bones. Patellofemoral stress syndrome, also known as patellofemoral pain, results from some deviation of the kneecap to the outside as it tracks along this groove while bending or straightening the knee. This deviation may result in a dull ache, tenderness, or swelling.

Patellofemoral stress syndrome or patellofemoral pain may be the result of several factors including, but not limited to: tight hamstring or calf muscles, tightness in the IT band (band that runs along the outside of the thigh), tightness in the lateral retinaculum (band that is used to hold tendons in place) of the knee, problems of the foot, muscular imbalance of the quadriceps, or weak inner thigh muscles. In order to correctly manage patellofemoral stress syndrome or patellofemoral pain, the cause of the deviation of the kneecap needs to be found along with strengthening and stretching of the imbalanced musculature. And in some cases, an orthotic may be needed to correct foot or other problems, and bracing may be beneficial to some people.

If you have the symptoms of patellofemoral stress syndrome or patellofemoral pain you may want to contact your primary physician and ask about physical therapy. Physical therapy can be very effective in treating your knee problems and early intervention can prevent your problem from becoming chronic.