

## Patella Tendonitis

Patella tendonitis is where there is pain within the patella tendon when it is used. The patella tendon joins the patella (Knee cap) to the tibia (Shin bone). The pain is felt at the patella end of the tendon.

Patella tendonitis affects young to middle aged people who like doing sport. It usually affects those who like doing running and jumping sports.

The pain is felt at the tip of the patella. Initially the pain only comes on after sport and does not stop your participation. Then the pain starts to affect you while you are doing sport as well as afterwards. Next it starts to affect the level of sport you can do. Finally the tendon may tear or stop all sport altogether.

Patella tendonitis is more common if there is a biomechanical abnormality within the leg that is putting more strain on the front of the knee, such as a stiff ankle. These need to be analysed.

Another cause of patella tendonitis is a patella spur. This is a growth of bone at the bottom of the patella that rubs on the patella tendon when it is being used.

All suspected cases should first have an X-ray of the knee to look for spurs. Usually though the diagnosis of patella tendonitis is made on a MRI scan.



Initial treatment is with the avoidance of the causing sport and R. I. C. E. (Rest, Ice, Compression & Elevation). A biomechanical analysis of the leg and gait (way of walking / running) should be undertaken, and any abnormalities corrected. Physiotherapy is then started concentrating on controlled stressing of the tendon (Eccentric loading exercises). This strategy will cure the majority of people.

Patella tendonitis that does not respond to the treatments above can be treated with dry needling under ultrasound control. Treatments such as platelet rich plasma injections and high volume saline injections have been tried but there is little definitive evidence at present for their use.

Surgery is reserved for those cases where there is a spur causing the patella tendonitis, or where there is degeneration within the tendon and symptoms that have persisted for over 6 months despite all other treatments.