

Plica

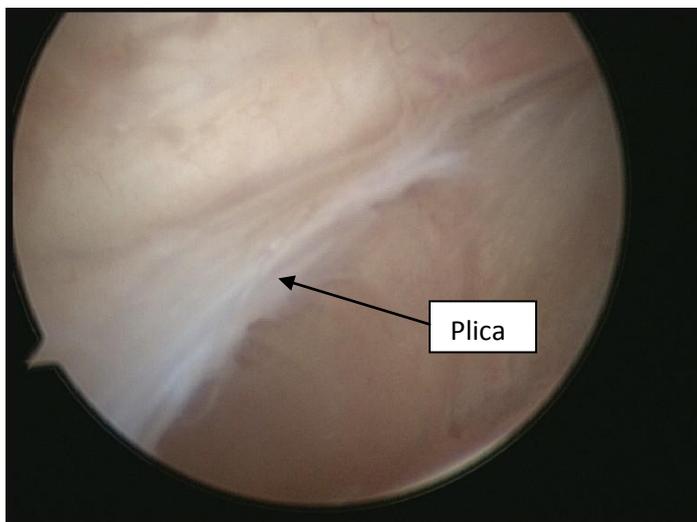
The knee joint has a delicate lining that is called the synovium. This synovium is responsible for producing the synovial fluid that acts like a natural “oil” to lubricate the knee as it moves. The synovium also keeps the synovial fluid within the knee joint.

The large distance that the knee bends means that the synovium has to be very elastic. The amount that the synovium has to stretch is more than it is capable of doing. It therefore folds when the knee is straightened to make sure that it is long enough when the knee bends. These folds are called Plica.

The commonest plica are found at the top of the patella (Knee cap) on each side.

Injury can occur by a direct blow to the knee or by catching the plica between the patella and femur. The injury may be very minor and not remembered. The plica then becomes swollen and painful.

The swelling means that the plica catches on the front of the femur as the knee is used. This catching causes more pain and swelling in the plica (vicious circle). This often causes problems with exercise as the amount of exercise that you can do before the pain stops you



becomes less with time. Eventually the normal stretchy nature of the plica is lost and the plica becomes thick and inelastic.

The pain caused by a plica is usually located to one spot near the patella. The pain is made worse with exercise and the amount of exercise gradually reduces with time. The knee though does not tend to swell much.

Examining the knee often reveals a tender spot next to the patella that is made worse by bending and straightening the knee while pressing on the tender spot.

X-rays do not reveal anything and the plica are so thin that they are often not seen on MRI scans.

Treatment in the early stages requires R. I. C. E. (Rest, Ice, Compression & Elevation), anti-inflammatory tablets and physiotherapy. If the problem becomes chronic (> 6 months) then an arthroscopy is required to remove the plica.