

ADOLESCENT KNEE PAIN

& North East Physiotherapy



Osgood Schlatters – Knee Pain in Adolescents?

Osgood-Schlatter disease is a common complaint in adolescents at the time of their growth spurt who complain of tenderness on the tibial tuberosity – the bump on the top of the shin just below the knee cap – often following high impact physical activities such as football, netball and basketball.

The condition is thought to be caused by the repeated contraction of the quadriceps (thigh muscles) pulling on the patella tendon which then exerts force on the tibial insertion causing softening and even partial tearing away of the actual growth plate at the top of the shin. With continued trauma new bone grows during the healing which can result in the increased size of the actual tuberosity – this is the bump that is often a concern for parents.

If your teenager complains of pain in this region of the knee make sure they are examined by a physiotherapist as soon as the pain commences – this is especially important in the younger athlete as poor management of any injury while in growth stages can have significant impact on future development and injury risk.

The good news for Osgood-Schlatter sufferers is that the condition resolves itself at the time when the bony fusion takes place at the growth plate – however this can still take 1-2 years to occur – so the best advice is to modify activities to reduce the extent of discomfort during and after the activity.

Some suggestions for exercise modification include reducing total training volume, concentrating more on session quality rather than quantity, not to perform higher impact activities on consecutive days and swapping higher impact activities such as running for lower impact swimming or cycling.

Treatment of the actual symptom of the condition may include regular icing (especially after activity) to reduce local discomfort, stretching of the quadriceps in an attempt to reduce the level of traction force exerted on the patella tendon, soft tissue release and massage to the quadriceps group to again reduce traction and intensive calf stretching in an attempt to control biomechanical compensations caused by rapid growth of the long bones.



Many patients with Osgood-Schlatters disease have issues relating to excessive sub-talar pronation (flat feet) which can act to increase internal rotation of the lower limb contributing to alignment issues – these patients are often best treated with an individually moulded orthotic device placed in their shoes to assist in controlling foot function.

If you are worried about your child's knees, or your own – contact the North East Physiotherapy team and we will arrange for you to have an Assessment.