

Knee Pain

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What Is Knee Pain?

Knee pain is a common condition that can affect people of all ages. It may develop from an injury, overuse, arthritis, or irritation of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, or other structures around the knee. The knee is one of the body's largest joints and plays an important role in walking, climbing stairs, squatting, and other daily activities.

Common Symptoms

Knee pain may feel:

- Sharp, dull, aching, burning, or stabbing
- Located in the front, inside, outside, or back of the knee
- Associated with swelling or stiffness
- Worse with walking, running, squatting, kneeling, or climbing stairs
- Accompanied by clicking, popping, locking, or a feeling that the knee may "give out"

Common Causes

Many different conditions can cause knee pain, including:

- Muscle or tendon strains, Ligament sprains
- Meniscus (cartilage) injuries
- Patellofemoral pain syndrome ("runner's knee")
- Tendinitis
- Iliotibial (IT) band syndrome
- Bursitis
- Arthritis
- Overuse injuries from sports, exercise, or repetitive activities

How Is Knee Pain Diagnosed?

Diagnosis begins with a detailed health history and physical examination.

- **X-rays** to evaluate bones, arthritis, or fractures
- **MRI scans** to assess ligaments, cartilage, tendons, and other soft tissues

Treatment Options

Many knee conditions improve with conservative treatment.

Conservative Care

- Activity modification
- Strengthening of the legs, hips, and core
- Manual therapy and joint mobilization
- Bracing or taping when appropriate
- Home exercise programs

Medical Treatment

Depending on the cause of your symptoms, treatment may also include:

- Anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs)
- Corticosteroid injections
- Orthopedic consultation
- Surgery for significant ligament, cartilage, or joint damage

What Is the Outlook?

Recovery depends on the cause and severity of the condition.

- Many overuse injuries and mild knee problems respond well to conservative treatment.
- Ligament and cartilage injuries may require longer recovery periods.
- Arthritis can often be managed successfully with exercise, lifestyle changes, and medical care.

Early treatment and following your rehabilitation plan can improve recovery and help prevent future problems.

Typical Treatment Schedule

Many patients are seen:

- **2–3 visits per week for 3–4 weeks**
- Progress is reassessed and treatment is adjusted as needed

Continuing home exercises and maintaining strength and flexibility are important for long-term knee health.

Seek Medical Attention If You Experience:

- Severe swelling after an injury
- Inability to bear weight on the leg
- Significant instability or the knee giving way
- Locking of the knee joint
- Fever, redness, or warmth around the knee
- Sudden calf pain or swelling