GET RID OF KNEE PAIN

BY

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BLESSED ORTHOPEDIC PHYSICAL THERAPY

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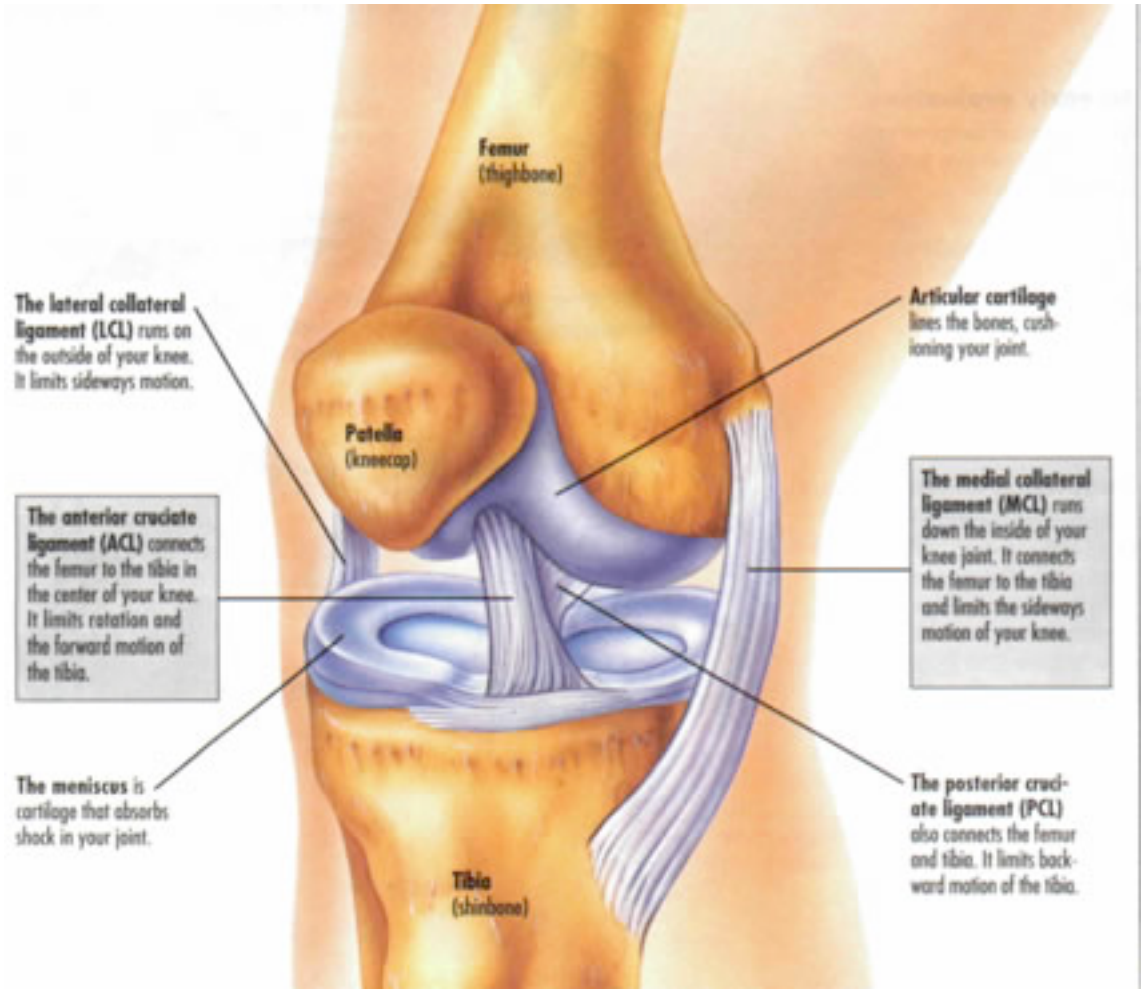
CHAPTER ONE

KNEE PROBLEMS AND INJURIES

Almost everyone has experienced a minor knee difficulty at some time or another. More often than not our bodily actions don't create problems, but it's unsurprising that symptoms develop from day-to-day deterioration, excessive use, or injuries. Knee issues and traumas generally take place in the course of sporting activities or leisure activities, work-related duties, or household tasks.



The knee is the biggest joint in the entire body. The top and lower bones of the knee are separated by two discs (menisci). The top leg bone (femur) and the lower leg bones (tibia and fibula) are linked by ligaments, tendons, and muscles. The surface of the bones within the knee joint is protected by articular cartilage, which absorbs shock and gives a sleek, sliding surface for joint mobility. See an illustration of the components of the knee. Although knee problems are often the result of an injury to one or more of these structures, they may have other causes. Some people are more prone to get knee problems than others. There are many factors that can increase the likelihood of knee injuries. Age, activity level, sporting activities and other medical conditions can play a role.

- **Sudden (acute) injuries**

Knee problems are mostly caused by injuries. Acute (sudden) injuries may be caused by a blow to the knee or from abnormal twisting, or bending the knee, or falling on the knee. Pain, bruising, or swelling can be severe and develop within minutes of the injury. Nerves or blood vessels may be nipped or damaged due to the injury. The knee or lower leg may feel weak, numb, or cold; It might tingle, or look blue or pale. Acute injuries include:

- Strains, sprains, or other injuries to the tendons and ligaments that connect and support the kneecap.
- Tears in the rubbery cushions of the meniscus (knee joint).
- Tears in the ligaments. The most commonly injured ligament of the knee is the medial collateral ligament (MCL).
- Fractures of the kneecap, lower part of the femur, or upper part of the tibia or fibula. Knee fractures are most often caused by an abnormal force, such as falling on your knee, a severe twisting motion, or any severe force that bends the knee, or if your knee hits an object with great force.

- Dislocation of the kneecap. This occurs most frequently in 13 to 18-year-old girls. Bits of bone or tissue from fractures or dislocations may get trapped in the joint and get in the way of movement.

- Dislocation of the knee joint. This is a rare injury that would only come from great force. It is a serious injury and would require immediate medical care.

Injuries arising from Overuse

Overuse injuries happen with repetitive activities or prolonged or repeated pressure on the knee. Activities like climbing stairs, jogging, bicycle riding, or jumping stress joints and other tissues and can lead to inflammation and irritation. Overuse injuries include:

- Bursitis, which is inflammation of the small sacs of fluid that cushion and lubricate the knee.

- Tendinitis, which is inflammation of the tendons or small tears in the tendons (tendinosis).

- Plica syndrome, which is thickening or folding of the knee ligaments.

- Patellofemoral pain syndrome, which is pain in the front of the knee from injury, overuse, excess weight, or problems in the kneecap.

- Iliotibial band syndrome, which is irritation and inflammation of the band of fibrous tissue that runs down the outside of the thigh.

CHAPTER TWO

CONDITIONS THAT MAY CAUSE KNEE PROBLEMS

Problems that are not directly related to injuries or overuse may occur in or around the knee.

- Degenerative joint diseases such as osteoarthritis may cause knee pain that tends to be worse in the morning but improves during the day. It often starts at the site of a previous injury. Other types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis, gout, or lupus, can also cause knee pain, stiffness and swelling.
- Osgood-Schlatter disease causes pain, tenderness, and swelling in the front of the knee below the kneecap. It is very common in boys aged 11 to 15.
- A Baker's (or popliteal) cyst causes swelling at the back of the knee.

- Infection in the skin (cellulitis), joint (infectious arthritis), bone (osteomyelitis), or bursa (septic bursitis) can cause pain and reduced knee movement.
- A problem in other places in the body, such as a nipped nerve or a hip problem can sometimes cause knee pain.
- Osteochondritis dissecans causes pain and reduced movement when a piece of bone or cartilage, or both, inside the knee joint loses its blood supply and dies.

CHAPTER THREE

ADDITIONAL FACTORS THAT MAY CAUSE KNEE PROBLEMS

Many conditions, lifestyle choices, diseases and medicines interfere with your ability to fight or heal infection. You may be at risk for more serious problems from your knee symptoms if you have any of the following. Make sure to tell your doctor about them.

- **Conditions**
  - Any problem or condition you have had since birth (congenital defect)
  - Previous knee injuries
  - Previous surgery at the area of the knee
  - Being a female. Females have a higher risk for knee injuries than males.
- **Lifestyle choices**
  - A job or hobby that requires you to kneel, such as carpet laying, roofing, or surfing
  - Abuse of or withdrawal from alcohol
  - Drugs abuse or withdrawal
  - Smoking or other tobacco use
- **Medicines**
  - Use of blood-thinning medicines, such as warfarin, heparin, or aspirin

- Chemotherapy or radiation therapy
- Corticosteroids, such as Betamethosone
- Medicines to prevent rejection of organ transplant

Diseases

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
- Gonorrhea
- Gout
- Hemophilia
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection
- Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP)
- Infectious arthritis
- Inherited bone disease
- Kidney disease
- Lupus
- Lyme disease
- Malnutrition or an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia
- Multiple sclerosis
- Obesity

- Osteoarthritis
- Osteomyelitis
- Osteoporosis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Septic bursitis

CHAPTER FOUR

KNEE PAIN - HOME TREATMENT

Home treatment may help ease pain, stiffness and swelling.

- **Rest** and protect an injured or sore area. Cease, change, or take a break from any activity that might be causing your pain or soreness. When resting, put a small pillow under your knee.

- **Ice** reduces pain and swelling. Apply ice or cold packs straight away to prevent or reduce swelling. Apply ice or cold packs for ten to twenty minutes, three or more times daily.

- For the initial forty eight hours after an injury, avoid things that might increase the swelling, such as hot showers, hot tubs, hot water bottles, or alcoholic drinks.

- After forty eight to seventy two hours, if the swelling has gone, apply heat and begin gentle exercise with the help of moist heat to help restore and maintain flexibility. Some experts recommend alternating between heat and cold treatments. Schedule an appointment with us so we can help you with recovery.
- **Compression** or wrapping an elastic bandage (such as an Ace wrap) around the injured or sore area will help reduce swelling.
- Don't wrap it too tightly, because this could cause more swelling under the affected area. Loosen the bandage if it feels too tight. Clue signs that the bandage is too tight are: numbness, tingling, increased pain, swelling, or coolness, in the area under the bandage.
- Don't expect bandages to protect or stabilize a knee injury.
- Speak to your doctor if you think you need to use a wrap for more than forty eight to seventy two hours; if this is true it means you may have a more serious problem.
- **Lift** the injured or sore area onto pillows when applying ice and anytime you are sitting or lying down. Try to keep the area concerned at or above the level of your heart to help minimize swelling.
- Until you can get advice from your doctor, reduce stress on your sore knee
- In the hand opposite your painful knee, use a cane or crutch.
- To keep weight off the leg with the sore knee, use two crutches. You can get canes or crutches at most pharmacies. Crutches are the best if using a cane makes you walk with a limp.
- Gently massage, or rub the area to reduce pain and encourage increased blood flow. Do not massage the injured area if it causes pain.

- Try the following exercises to maintain flexibility:

- Hamstring stretch

- Knee-to-chest exercise

- Avoid high-impact exercises, such as playing tennis, running, skiing, or snowboarding until your knee ceases to be painful or swollen.

Do not smoke. Smoking slows down healing because it reduces blood supply and delays repair of tissue. For more information, see the topic Quitting Tobacco Use.

Schedule an appointment with us to learn about how we can help you. We are the experts.

Medicines you can buy without a prescription
Try a nonprescription medicine to help treat your fever or pain:
1. Acetaminophen, such as Tylenol or Panadol **NOTE**: Do not use a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicine, such as ibuprofen or aspirin, for the first twenty four hours after an injury. Using these medicines may lengthen the time it takes for your blood to clot and cause more severe bruising from bleeding under the skin. 2. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs): 2.1 Ibuprofen, such as Advil or Motrin 2.2 Naproxen, such as Aleve or Naprosyn 2.3 Aspirin (also a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug), such as Bayer or Bufferin Talk to your child's doctor before switching back and forth between doses of acetaminophen and ibuprofen. When you switch between two medicines, there is a chance your child will get too much medicine.

Safety tips
Be sure to follow these safety tips when you use a nonprescription medicine:
Carefully read and follow all directions on the medicine bottle or box. Do not take more than the recommended dose. Do not take a medicine if you have had an allergic reaction to it in the past. If you have been told to avoid a medicine, call your doctor before you take it If you are, or could be pregnant, do not take any medicine other than acetaminophen unless your doctor has told you to. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than age twenty unless your doctor tells you to.

Symptoms to Watch For During Home Treatment

Use the 'Check Your Symptoms' section to assess your symptoms if any of the following occur during home treatment:

- Signs of infection develop.
- Numbness, weakness or tingling develops.
- Your knee, lower leg, or foot becomes pale or cool or looks blue.
- Symptoms do not improve with home treatment.
- Symptoms become more severe or frequent.

CHAPTER FIVE

KNEE PROBLEMS AND INJURIES – PREVENTION

The following tips may prevent knee problems.

- **General prevention tips**

- Always wear a seat belt in motor vehicles.
- Don't carry too heavy objects. Use a step stool. Don’t stand on chairs or other unstable objects.
- During sports or recreational activities, such as roller-skating or soccer, always wear knee guards.
- Stretch, to warm up your muscles, before and after physical exercise, sports, or recreational activities.

- To avoid straining your muscles, use the correct techniques or positions during activities.
- Avoid repeated movements that can cause injury. Use equipment appropriate to your size, strength, and ability. In daily routines or hobbies, check for any activities in which you need to make repeated knee movements.
- Think about taking lessons to learn the correct techniques for sports. Get a trainer or a person who is familiar with sports equipment to check your equipment to check if it is well suited to your level of ability, body size, and body strength. We can help you with this.
- Call your human resources department for information on other ways of doing your job or to talk about using different equipment if you feel that certain activities at your workplace are causing pain or soreness from overuse.

Tips especially about the knee

- Keep your knees and the muscles that support them strong and flexible. Warm up before activities. Try these stretches:
- Hamstring stretch
- Knee-to-chest exercise
- Calf stretch
- Straight-leg raises
- Avoid activities that stress your knees, such as deep knee bends or downhill running.
- Wear shoes with good arch supports.
- Do not wear high-heeled shoes.

- When playing contact sports, wear the right shoes that are made for the surface you are playing or running on, such as a track or tennis court.

- Replace running shoes every 300 to 500 miles (480 to 800 kilometers). Experts recommend getting new athletic shoes every three months or after 500 miles of wear. Again, we are the experts – arrange an appointment.

Tips specially relevant to female athletes

Sports trainers can recommend and arrange suitable training programs that help women learn to run, jump, and pivot with their knees bent, to avoid knee injuries. In sports such as soccer, volleyball and basketball, women who bend their knees and play low to the ground have less knee injuries than women who run and pivot with legs stiff. We can help you with courses like this.

Use of knee braces

Some people use knee braces after a knee injury or to prevent knee injuries. There are many kinds of knee braces, ranging from soft fabric sleeves to rigid, metal hinged, braces that protect and support the knee. If your doctor has recommended you to use a knee brace, follow his or her instructions. Also, if you use a knee brace to help avoid problems, follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Keep bones strong

- Eat a nutritious diet with plenty of calcium and vitamin D, which helps your body absorb calcium. Calcium is present in dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese and dark green, leafy vegetables, such as cabbage and other similar foods. Exercise and stay active. It is best to do weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, jogging, dancing, stair climbing, or lifting weights, for forty five to sixty minutes at least four days a week. Weight-bearing exercises stimulate fresh bone growth by working your muscles and bones against gravity. Non-weight bearing exercises, such as swimming, are good for your general health but do not stimulate new bone growth. Talk to your doctor about exercise

programs that are suitable for you. Begin slowly, especially if you have been inactive.

- **Quick Tips:** Fitting Physical Activity Into Your Day
- If you are a man, don't drink more than two alcoholic drinks a day, or more than one alcoholic drink a day if you are a woman. People who drink more than this may be at higher risk for weakening their bones (osteoporosis). Drinking alcohol also increases your risk for falling and breaking bones.
- Do not start, or stop smoking if you already do. Being a smoker greatly increases your risk for developing osteoporosis. It also interferes with blood supply and healing. Please contact us to learn more about these preventive measures.
- Schedule an evaluation with us so that we can best help you.

Possible physical abuse

- Bruises are often the first sign of physical abuse. Seek help if:
- You suspect abuse to others. Call your local child or adult protective agency, police, or a doctor, nurse, or counselor.
- You, or someone you know, is a victim of violence.
- You have difficulty controlling your anger with a child or other person in your care.

CHAPTER SIX

KNEE PROBLEMS AND INJURIES - PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

You can help your doctor diagnose and treat your condition by being prepared to answer the following questions:

- What are your main symptoms?
- How long have you had your symptoms?
- What were you doing when your symptoms started?
- Have you had this problem in the past?
- What was the diagnosis?
- How was it treated?
- How and when did an injury occur? How was it treated? Were illegal drugs or alcohol involved in your injury?

- Have you had any injuries in the past to the same place? Do you have any continuing problems because of the previous injury?
- Have you ever had knee surgery?
- What activities, related to sports, work, or your lifestyle, make your symptoms better or worse?
- Do you think that activities related to your job or hobbies caused your symptoms?
- What home treatment measures have you tried? Did they help?
- What nonprescription medicines have you taken? Did they help?
- Do you have any health risks?

We can help with advice on all these matters

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