

Osgood-Schlatter Disease

What You Need to Know

What Is Osgood-Schlatter Disease?

Osgood-Schlatter disease is a common cause of knee pain in growing children and adolescents, typically between the ages of 10 and 15. Despite its name, it is not truly a disease — it is a painful overuse condition affecting the growth plate just below the kneecap, at the top of the shin bone (tibia) where the patellar tendon attaches.

During growth spurts, bones grow faster than muscles and tendons can adapt. The repeated pulling of the patellar tendon on the still-developing tibial growth plate causes inflammation, irritation, and sometimes a painful bony bump just below the kneecap. It is especially common in young athletes who play sports involving running, jumping, and kicking.

What Does It Feel Like?

- Pain and tenderness directly over the bony bump just below the kneecap
- Swelling or a noticeable bump at the top of the shin
- Pain that worsens with running, jumping, squatting, and kneeling
- Pain that improves significantly with rest
- Tightness in the quadriceps and hamstrings
- Pain that is worse during and immediately after sport
- The bump at the shin may remain permanently even after symptoms resolve

What Makes It Worse?

- Running and jumping sports (soccer, basketball, volleyball, gymnastics)
- Squatting, lunging, or kneeling
- Rapidly increasing training load
- Playing on hard surfaces
- Tight quadriceps muscles pulling harder on the growth plate

Who Gets It?

- Most common in boys aged 12–15 and girls aged 10–13 (corresponding to peak growth spurts)
- Athletes who play running and jumping sports are most affected
- Can occur in both knees simultaneously (in about 25–30% of cases)
- Tends to resolve on its own once the growth plate closes (after growth is complete)

When Should I Be Concerned?

- Pain that is constant, even at rest
- Significant swelling, warmth, or redness
- Pain that prevents any weight-bearing
- Symptoms in a child who has already finished growing
- A fracture through the growth plate — rare but possible with severe, untreated cases

The Good News

Osgood-Schlatter disease almost always resolves completely once growth is finished, typically by age 16–18. In the meantime, physical therapy is very effective at managing symptoms — stretching tight quad and hamstring muscles, strengthening the hip and knee, and providing activity modification guidance allows most young athletes to continue participating in sport with appropriate management.

The great news for young athletes: Osgood-Schlatter almost always **resolves completely** once growth plates close, and PT keeps you active in the meantime.

This information is for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for a professional evaluation. Call us today — we have immediate openings with no waitlist.

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