



Suffolk Podiatry

Children and Knee Pain (Osgood Schlatter's)

What is Osgood Schlatter's?

Osgood-Schlatter's is a common cause of knee pain in children and adolescents. It occurs when there is irritation at the growth area just below the knee, called the tibial tuberosity (the bony bump at the top of the shinbone).

It is an overuse condition that typically affects children aged between 10 and 15 years, particularly during periods of rapid growth.

What causes Osgood Schlatter's?

During growth spurts, bones can grow faster than the surrounding muscles and soft tissues. This can create increased tension through the patellar tendon, which attaches the kneecap (patella) to the tibial tuberosity.

Repeated pulling at this attachment can lead to irritation and pain in the area.

Symptoms of Osgood Schlatter's

- Pain just below the knee, at the tibial tuberosity
- Swelling around the front of the knee, particularly after activity
- Tenderness when pressing on the area
- Pain that worsens with activities such as running, jumping, or climbing stairs
- Tightness in the thigh (quadriceps) or hamstring muscles
- Symptoms that improve with rest but may return with activity
- Pain during higher-impact movement



Treatment of Osgood Schlatter's

The aim of treatment is to reduce pain and allow the area to recover. The Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation (R.I.C.E.) approach is often helpful:

Rest: This is the most important part of management. Activity should be reduced to a level your child can manage without pain. High-impact activities may need to be temporarily reduced. Lower-impact activities, such as swimming or cycling, can usually be continued.

Ice (Cold Therapy): Apply ice to the affected area for 10–15 minutes, two to three times per day, particularly after activity.

An ice cube massage can also be helpful, keep the ice moving at all times.

Important: Always wrap ice in a towel and avoid applying it directly to the skin.

Compression: A compression bandage or patellar strap may help reduce discomfort by supporting the tendon and reducing strain. These are available from pharmacies or online.

Elevation: Encourage your child to elevate the leg when resting, especially after activity, to help reduce swelling.

Pain Relief: Simple pain relief (such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen) may help if needed. Always seek advice from a pharmacist or GP before giving medication.

Referrals

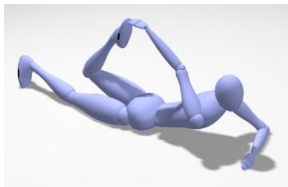
- **Physiotherapy:** If symptoms persist, your child may benefit from a referral to a paediatric physiotherapist. They can provide strengthening exercises, improve flexibility, and support symptom management.
- **Podiatry:** If needed, your child may be assessed for insoles (orthotics), which can help improve lower limb alignment and reduce strain on the knee. However, physiotherapy is often the main approach for managing symptoms.

Helpful exercises

Helpful Exercises

Once everyday activities are comfortable, gentle exercises may help.

- **Stretching:** Gentle quadriceps stretches may reduce tension. These should be done slowly and without pain. If stretching increases discomfort, it should be stopped.
- **Massage:** Gentle massage of the thigh muscles may help reduce tightness and improve comfort.



Lying Quadriceps Stretch

Lie on your front and bend one knee, bringing your foot towards your buttock. Gently hold your ankle and bring the foot closer until a stretch is felt in the front of the thigh. Hold for 20–30 seconds and repeat 2–3 times on

each side.



Standing quad stretch

Stand upright, using a wall or chair for support if needed. Bend your knee and bring your foot towards your buttock. Hold the stretch for 20–30 seconds. Repeat 2–3 times, ensuring the stretch remains comfortable and pain-free.

Choosing the right footwear for growing feet

Well-fitting footwear with secure fastening is important for healthy foot development. Flexible footwear is usually the most appropriate choice.

- Lace-up shoes often provide good support, but any shoe with a secure fastening (such as Velcro or buckles) is suitable
- Look for cushioning in the sole to help absorb impact
- Well-fitting trainers can be just as suitable as traditional shoes if they provide flexibility and support
- Children with more flexible (looser) joints may benefit from footwear that offers additional ankle support

For more detailed guidance, please refer to our Children's Footwear Advice Leaflet, available on the podiatry pages of our website: <https://suffolkfed.org.uk/healthcare-services/podiatry/>

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