

WHY IS THERE PAIN IN MY KNEE?

Patellofemoral pain (PFP) is a leading knee problem among active people, especially young athletes. Though common, it is often misunderstood and difficult to manage because of its complexity. Learning more about PFP can reduce risk factors and improve discussions between patients and health professionals, such as athletic trainers.

PFP Explained

PFP is pain at the front of the knee and around the patella (kneecap). Many factors can irritate the knee joint; the typical symptom is a dull ache at the front of the knee. PFP-related pain and stiffness can make daily tasks, such as climbing stairs and kneeling, harder.

Why Does PFP Occur?

Several factors may contribute to PFP and its complexity. These include:

- Excess hip adduction and internal rotation during movements such as running or jump landings
- Quadriceps tightness and weakness
- Slower contraction in the inner quadriceps muscle compared with the outer portion
- Greater knee abduction impulses and moments when running or landing

Prevention Measures and Treatment Choices

With recurrent or long-term symptoms in as many as 70 to 90 percent of people with PFP, early detection is key to prevention, treatment and management. A sports medicine professional, such as your athletic trainer, can assess risk through tests including gait and jump-landing checks. Your AT can design a prevention plan with lower-limb stretching and exercises to strengthen the quadriceps and hips. People diagnosed with PFP can expect several treatment methods that address impairments of the knee, hip, foot and ankle.

References: National Athletic Trainers' Association; Journal of Athletic Training; American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
Infographic: National Athletic Trainers' Association