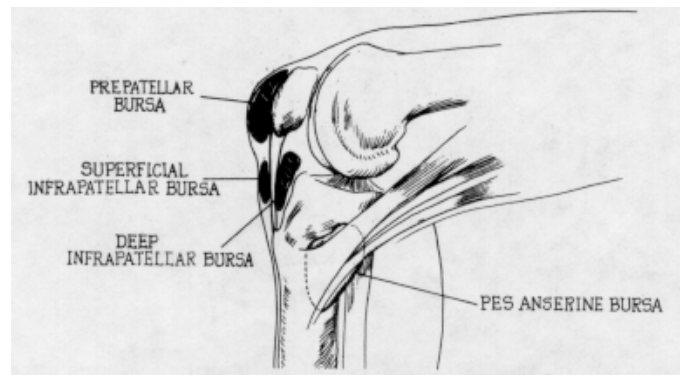


BE NICE TO YOUR KNEES

Our knees deserve a lot of respect. They've carried us through childhood into youth and adulthood. Our knees endure countless hours of bending, squatting, cycling, and walking, all courtesy of the knees. Like many other things, we often don't appreciate the work of this incredible joint until it's no longer working properly.

Each year more than six million Americans seek medical help for knee pain – about 2.5% of the population, according to the book *Knee Pain*. Because of the wear and tear our knees undergo each day – as well as the extra demands placed on them by fitness and sports activities – the knee is the most injured joint, representing 26% of orthopedic and rehabilitative business.



We see ACL injuries from slipping on the ice, skiing, wakeboarding, mountain climbing, baseball, volleyball, and basketball – mainly cutting, jumping, and twisting sports, where knee injuries are as common as outdoor sports. We don't see it as much from straight-forward sports such as running and biking.

To ward off time-consuming ACL and other knee injuries, many women's sports teams – from basketball to soccer – have instituted workout regimens focused on strengthening this joint. One study conducted by Timothy E. Hewett, MD, of Cincinnati Sports Medicine shows that this type of training can reduce the incidence of injury. The study involved videotaping and analyzing 49 female high-school varsity athletes. The women were directed to jump off a one-foot-high box during videotaping, which was later analyzed for landing patterns. The women then underwent a six-week training program that included single-leg balances, jumps, and stretching for 90 minutes per day, three days a week. The study results indicated that trained, conditioned knees can prevent as much as 80% of ACL and other knee injuries in female athletes.

THE CULPRITS

The mechanics of the knee are very complex, so much so that there are 25 to 35 different types of knee injuries. The four most common knee problems are: 1) pain from the knee cap; 2) torn meniscus (cartilage that cushions the knee, often worn out over time); 3) ligament problems; and 4) tendon problems. Injuries involving these areas are either chronic or acute.

Chronic knee injuries include things like strains, sprains, and tendonitis. In my office, the chronic injuries are more common, but these can easily be avoided. Use common sense in how often or hard you work out. Symptoms of chronic injuries include inflammation of the knee, aching pain, grinding or a clicking noise during movement of the joint.

Symptoms of acute injury are much more noticeable. A sudden trauma to the knee will result in swelling of the joint, intense pain, nausea, and, in the case of ACL tear, a popping or cracking sound.

If you experience the symptoms of knee pain – acute or chronic – make a trip to a doctor that specializes in extremity injuries for an exam. Catching the signs of injury early on will greatly benefit you; rehabilitating a knee pushed to the edge may save you from surgery or long-term problems.

A practical program of targeted exercises and stretches can help you combat the risk of knee injury. The stronger the knee is at absorbing a twist or impact, the better the change of avoiding an injury.

NOVA Pain & Rehab Center specializes in helping you **Be Nice to Your Knees. If you or someone you know is having a problem, call us today and schedule an appointment for a consultation and an evaluation. **Call 703-535-8887 to schedule your appointment**. Remember, waiting to see if the problem will resolve on it own could invite a more serious condition. Get yourself checked out **TODAY!****