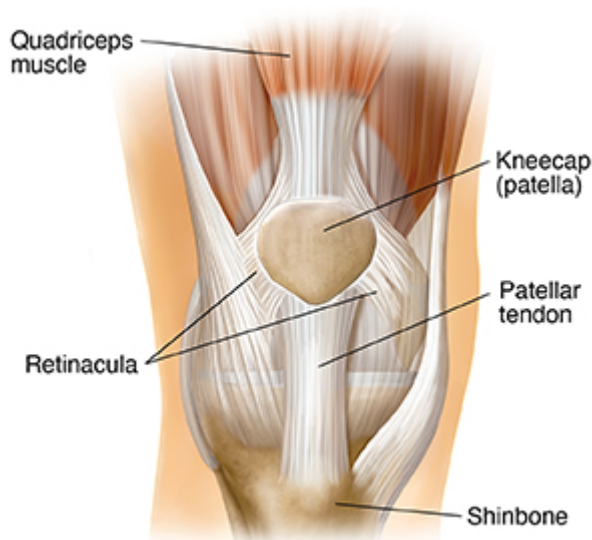


The Kneecap (Patella) and Knee Joint



The kneecap (patella) is a small triangular bone that rests on the front of your knee. It is just one of the many parts that make up the knee joint. Some of the other parts are muscles, ligaments, and leg bones. The kneecap provides leverage for your muscles as they bend and straighten the leg. It also protects the knee joint.

- **Quadriceps muscles.** These are at the front of the thigh. They help the kneecap slide against the thighbone. They also help to straighten the leg.
- **Kneecap.** This allows the quadriceps muscles to work better as they tighten. The kneecap also protects the bones and tissues under it.
- **Retinacula.** These are fibrous bands on the sides of the knee. They help hold the kneecap in place.
- **Patellar tendon.** This is a fibrous cord that connects the kneecap to the shinbone.
- **Shinbone.** This is the bone just below the knee. It is also called the tibia and is the second-longest bone of the body.



The kneecap up close

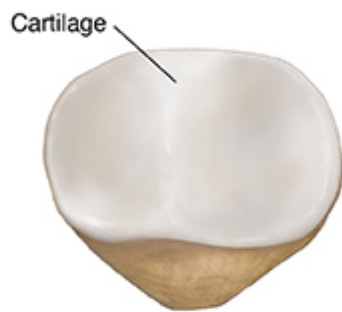
Take a closer look at this small bone to see how it works.

A closer view of the kneecap shows the difference between the smooth cartilage and the rougher bone beneath.

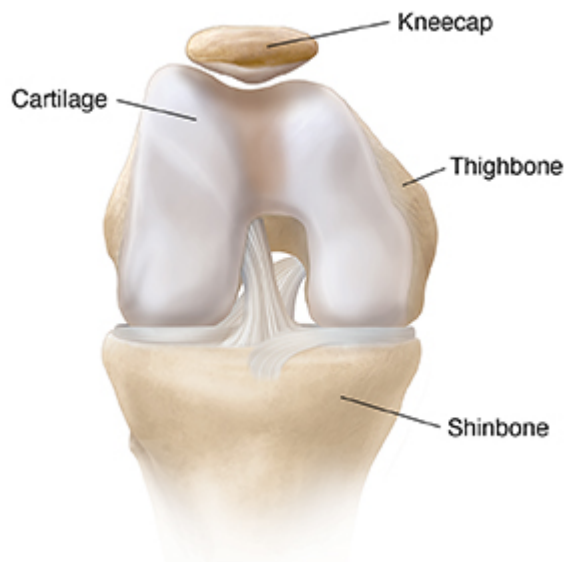
From the front, you can see the kneecap has a slightly rounded, shield-like shape.



From the back, you can see cartilage. This is tough, cushiony tissue that covers the bone. It helps the kneecap slide easily against the thighbone.



From the top, you can see that the kneecap sits in a groove or “track” in the thighbone.



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