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Knee pain in adults: Symptom Checker

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Knee pain

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**MCV Related tag(s)**

**Primary Location**

Diseases and Conditions

**Tease**

Knee pain can seriously impair walking and exercise. Identify possible common causes based on symptoms you're experiencing.

**Abstract**

Find possible common causes of knee pain in adults. See our Symptom Checker.

**Benefit Summary**

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**ENTER IN FARCRY:**

**When to get medical help**

Get emergency care if knee pain is accompanied by any of the following factors: (1, 2)

You experience bleeding or severe pain after an injury.

Bone or tendons are exposed.

The knee is visibly out of place.

There's sudden swelling or redness.

You can't bend your knee or put weight on it.

You heard a popping sound or snapping sensation.

The pain is associated with fever and chills.

**Self-care strategies** (3, p. 200)

If you're experiencing knee pain, follow these guidelines, often called the P.R.I.C.E. treatment:

**Protect.** Protect the area from further injury.

**Rest.** Avoid activities that hurt.

**Ice.** Reduce pain and inflammation with an ice pack.

**Compress.** Reduce swelling with an elastic bandage.

**Elevate.** Raise your foot or ankle as you rest.

You may temporarily lessen pain with an over-the-counter pain reliever, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others), naproxen (Aleve, others) or acetaminophen (Tylenol, others). Use only as directed on the label, and do not take combinations of pain relievers.

**IMAGE**Knee ligaments IM00301

Caption: Two of the four ligaments that connect the thighbone (femur) to the shinbone (tibia) are the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and the posterior cruciate ligament (PCL). The ACL and PCL crisscross one another as they join these leg bones together.

**More Information**

Knee pain DS00555

**END OF FARCRY TEXT**

Find possible causes of knee pain based on specific factors. Check one or more factors on this page that apply to your symptom.

**Pain best described as**

Beginning suddenly

Dull or achy

Gradually worsening

Sharp or severe

**Located**

Along one or both sides of the knee

Around the kneecap

Behind the knee

In the knee joint

**Triggered by**

Everyday activities

Injury

Overuse

**Worsened by**

Movement

Prolonged sitting or standing

Rest or inactivity

**Accompanied by**

Bruising or discoloring

Decreased range of motion

Feeling of instability

Fever or chills

Grating sensation

Inability to bear weight

Locking or catching

Pain or stiffness in other joints

Popping or snapping

Skin redness

Stiffness

Swelling

Warmth to touch

**Possible causes**

These diseases and conditions match at least one of the factors you selected. Those with the most matches are listed first.

DS00898 ACL injury (4, p. 920; 5)

Pain best described as beginning suddenly

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located in the knee joint

Triggered by injury

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by feeling of instability

Accompanied by inability to bear weight

Accompanied by popping or snapping

Accompanied by swelling

DS00448 Baker's cyst (4, p. 922; 6)

Pain best described as dull or achy

Pain best described as gradually worsening

Located behind the knee

Triggered by everyday activities

Triggered by overuse

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by stiffness

Accompanied by swelling

DS00777 Chondromalacia patella (7)

Pain best described as dull or achy

Located around the kneecap

Triggered by everyday activities

Triggered by overuse

Worsened by movement

Worsened by prolonged sitting or standing

Worsened by rest or inactivity

Accompanied by grating sensation

Accompanied by stiffness

DS00090 Gout (4, p. 922; 8; 18)

Pain best described as gradually worsening

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located in the knee joint

Accompanied by skin redness

Accompanied by swelling

Accompanied by warmth to touch

DS00954 Knee bursitis (9; 18)

Pain best described as dull or achy

Pain best described as gradually worsening

Located along one or both sides of the knee

Located around the kneecap

Triggered by everyday activities

Triggered by injury

Triggered by overuse

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by decreased range of motion

Accompanied by skin redness

Accompanied by warmth to touch

DS00019 Osteoarthritis (4, p. 921; 10)

Pain best described as dull or achy

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located in the knee joint

Triggered by everyday activities

Triggered by overuse

Worsened by prolonged sitting or standing

Worsened by rest or inactivity

Accompanied by decreased range of motion

Accompanied by grating sensation

Accompanied by stiffness

DS00625 Patellar tendinitis (4, p. 918; 11)

Pain best described as dull or achy

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located around the kneecap

Triggered by everyday activities

Triggered by overuse

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by swelling

DS00928 Posterior cruciate ligament injury (12)

Pain best described as beginning suddenly

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located in the knee joint

Triggered by injury

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by feeling of instability

Accompanied by inability to bear weight

Accompanied by swelling

DS00717 Pseudogout (13; 18)

Pain best described as beginning suddenly

Pain best described as gradually worsening

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located in the knee joint

Accompanied by skin redness

Accompanied by swelling

Accompanied by warmth to touch

DS00020 Rheumatoid arthritis (14; 18)

Pain best described as dull or achy

Located in the knee joint

Triggered by everyday activities

Triggered by overuse

Worsened by rest or inactivity

Accompanied by decreased range of motion

Accompanied by pain or stiffness in other joints

Accompanied by stiffness

Accompanied by swelling

Accompanied by warmth to touch

DS00545 Septic arthritis (15)

Pain best described as beginning suddenly

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located in the knee joint

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by decreased range of motion

Accompanied by fever or chills

Accompanied by inability to bear weight

Accompanied by skin redness

Accompanied by swelling

Accompanied by warmth to touch

DS00343 Sprains and strains (16)

Pain best described as beginning suddenly

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Located in the knee joint

Triggered by injury

Triggered by overuse

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by bruising or discoloring

Accompanied by feeling of instability

Accompanied by inability to bear weight

Accompanied by stiffness

Accompanied by swelling

DS00932 Torn meniscus (17; 18)

Pain best described as beginning suddenly

Pain best described as gradually worsening

Pain best described as sharp or severe

Triggered by injury

Worsened by movement

Accompanied by decreased range of motion

Accompanied by feeling of instability

Accompanied by inability to bear weight

Accompanied by locking or catching

Accompanied by popping or snapping

Accompanied by stiffness

Accompanied by swelling

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PAGE 6