

[Live Well to Learn Well](#)

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health.cornell.edu

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Appointments:
[Monday–Saturday](#)

Check web for hours, services, providers, and appointment information

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Patellofemoral pain syndrome is a recurring pain felt under or around your knee cap in the front, or anterior, part of the knee. Usually, it is unrelated to a specific injury, developing over time as a result of an increase in physical activity.

Symptoms

The pain may be experienced as a nagging ache or an occasional sharp pain causing you to limp or to limit your activities. It is often more pronounced when:

- going up or down stairs and hills
- squatting
- running
- sitting for prolonged periods

This can be particularly challenging for those working or studying in an environment like Cornell and Ithaca.

Risk Factors

Recent studies have highlighted the potential risk factors. These may include:

- weakness in hip and thigh muscles
- altered movement patterns in the lower extremity
- changes in foot and ankle motion

How common is knee pain?

This particular syndrome is more common than you might think. In fact, patellofemoral pain syndrome is one the most common reasons people seek healthcare in the U.S. It has been reported that 74 percent of those who suffer from knee pain will decrease their overall physical activity for at least 5 years after the initial onset and between 70 and 90 percent will have recurrent or chronic pain.

Do I need an evaluation?

Since the cause of knee pain is often multi-factorial, a thorough evaluation is necessary.

An evaluation includes:

- a movement assessment of how you walk, step up and down stairs, balance on one leg, etc.
- an assessment of your running
- an examination of motion and strength in your back and legs

Treatment

Once the cause of knee pain has been identified, a personalized treatment plan will be developed based on an individual's risk factors and evaluation results.

In general, strengthening weakened hip and thigh muscles helps to decrease stresses at the knee. Training to move, walk, and run with better biomechanics also can reduce knee pain.

The good news is: effective treatments are available. If you are experiencing knee (or any other kind of pain), get started on the path of healing now.

Physical Therapy

Each year, Cornell Health's physical therapy (PT) department sees many people with patellofemoral pain. Our physical therapists, trained in orthopedic musculoskeletal examinations, perform thorough evaluations to offer customized individual treatment programs. PT services are offered to faculty, staff, students and student spouses/partners in Schoellkopf Hall (on Campus Road). Appointments are available Monday – Friday.

To schedule an appointment for an initial evaluation with PT, please call: 607-255-7217. For more information about PT at Cornell Health, visit: health.cornell.edu/pt.

Factors contributing to an altered movement pattern

Causes

- decreased hip strength
- decreased strength of thigh muscles that strengthen your knee
- tracking of the knee cap when you bend your knee
- limited ankle motion or too much motion in the foot



Adapted from the Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy

