

THE REHAB ROOM

Osgood Schlatter Disease

Osgood Schlatter's Disease (commonly known as "growing pains") manifests itself as pain at the top of the tibia, just below the knee. It is an Osteochondritis (inflammation of the bone) that occurs in the growth plate of the tibial tuberosity. It usually occurs in teenagers who are completing a high level of training, combined with a growth spurt. It mainly affects boys between the ages of 10-12 and girls between 13-15. The affected athlete will be very tender on palpation over the tibial tuberosity and some swelling may occur around the area. A hard lump may form on the tibial tuberosity at the base of the patellar tendon as a result of the irritation. This bony formation may remain even when the condition has settled.



It is a very common condition that presents insidiously and gradually worsens. The activities that aggravate it the most tend to be repetitive movements such as running and jumping which is why it commonly affects triathletes.

The main treatment for Osgood Schlatters is activity modification. This will involve either reducing the number of training sessions and/or the intensity of the training. It is important for the athlete to know that this will only be for a temporary period of time while the condition settles. There is no evidence to suggest that reducing training will speed up the 'healing' process but it does aid pain control which is particularly important in this age group. Sport can usually continue as pain allows. Other treatment options for Osgood Schlatter's includes...

- 1) Soft tissue release for the surrounding muscles such as the calf and quadricep muscles help reduce any excess pressure on the knees. This is important since muscles tighten up considerably during a growth spurt. It is advised to foam roll the quadriceps, rather than statically stretch them since stretching can pull on the muscle insertion on the tibial tuberosity which will further aggravate the condition.
- 2) Icing for 10-15 minutes post exercise helps to reduce the inflammation.

- 3) Physiotherapists may also try taping to offload the knee and help correct any abnormalities in patellar alignment.
- 4) Correcting biomechanics of the lower limb. If the feet are overpronating (rolling inwards) this puts increased forces through the knee which can exacerbate the problem. This can be solved temporarily with taping or more permanently with custom made orthotics.
- 5) Strengthening the gluteal, quadricep and calf muscles to increase knee control.



Osgood Schlatter's may fluctuate on and off over a couple of years while the athlete continues to grow. The main message to remember is that it will settle with time and controlling the pain with activity modification is key.

By: Rowena Myrans