



# ANTERIOR KNEE PAIN

## 01 What causes my knee to hurt?

Anterior knee pain is often thought to be due to overloading the joint, e.g. jumping or running more than the knee can tolerate at the time. However, we cannot always identify one specific cause for knee pain. It is important to acknowledge that there are also factors other than just tissue injury associated with pain. Sometimes the pain persists even after the injury has healed. Some of the factors affecting your pain and perhaps why it may persist are your past experiences of pain, pain beliefs, your mental state (i.e. high stress or anxiety) and sleep quality.

## 02 What can I do to make it better?

Sometimes making changes to the level of physical activity can make a difference. This does not mean that you should totally stop moving and avoid pain. It means that you should manage the loads affecting your knee so that the pain level decreases.

Here are a few examples that you can apply to your life and the activities that you do.

1. For the first two months, reduce or change the activities that make your pain worse.

For example, if it is running you can try any of the below changes:

- switch to a combination of walking and jogging
- decrease the duration of running
- decrease the running times per week
- decrease the speed
- decrease the duration, but increase frequency
- change running turf
- change running cadence etc.
- change to some other activity for a while with less forces acting on your knee such as swimming, water running, cycling, ellipse machine etc.

2. After a few months have passed and the pain has diminished, it is important to progress slowly. Avoid rushing straight back to the normal training or activities that you were doing before your knee started hurting.

Add load bit by bit. If your pain does not get worse during the activity and is below two (2) on the pain scale from 0 to 10 (0 = no pain, 10 = the worst pain ever) then the load increase has been appropriate.

If you return too quickly to too high loads, the pain may increase. However, it is extremely important to remember that even though at times the pain may increase, there is no reason to be alarmed. One should understand that increased pain simply indicates that perhaps the return to normal activity levels has not been gradual enough. It does not mean that something irreversible has happened.



A person wearing a white short-sleeved shirt is shown from the waist down, holding their right knee with both hands, suggesting they are experiencing pain or discomfort. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

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### **When rest eases the pain, why should I move?**

You might think that if being active and moving makes your knee hurt, then you should stop moving, however that is not true. Inactivity affects your overall fitness and strength and can further reduce the load tolerance of your knee. Therefore, you should keep active, but find activities you can do while unloading your knee for a while. For instance, reduce jogging or ball games that include running, sudden stops and turns and take up cycling or swimming or another activity with less impact forces acting on your knee.

Sometimes rehab exercises may feel boring. It is however extremely important to commit to performing them as prescribed. Too much can provoke your pain and lengthen your recovery time - , too little and not frequently enough does not enable improvements to take place.

Take time to focus on strengthening your muscles. Although the main focus is on lower leg and hip muscles, it is important to also remember that trunk and upper body strengthening as balance is the key. Have confidence in yourself and your body.

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### **Pain monitoring**

In general, focusing on pain is not recommended as pain or pain level does not always represent tissue health. However, pain monitoring is useful when overloading is part of the problem. Then it is recommended to monitor how your activity affects the pain. It can be useful to monitor how much you can do and progress, without your pain increasing significantly. Yet, it is good to remember that other things affect our pain experience too.