

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a question, compliment, comment or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

Painful knees in adolescents

A patient's guide

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What is the main cause?

Adolescent boys sometimes develop painful bumps on the front of their shins, just below the knee cap. These bumps form where the large tendon from the knee cap joins on to the shin bone.

Because the bones are not yet attached to the tendon, it sometimes pulls away from the main bone and becomes inflamed and painful. This is called Osgood Schlatter's disease. It is very common in adolescent boys and some girls, especially if they play football.

Is it serious?

The condition causes pain on moving the knee and the bumps can be tender to touch. The knee joint itself and the rest of the leg are normal.

Apart from causing pain, the condition is not serious at all. It always settles down as the child grows and the bones harden.

What needs to be done?

Painkillers or anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen can help. Your child should avoid football when his/her knees are painful.

When the condition first develops or if the pain is particularly severe, it helps to see a physiotherapist; this can be arranged through your doctor. The physiotherapist will give treatment to reduce the pain. He/she will also teach the adolescent important exercises to do regularly.

What will happen in the future?

The knees may be painful on and off for several years in mid-adolescence. Most boys and girls can keep the symptoms at bay by doing their exercises and avoiding football during bad patches.

It always disappears before adulthood and the legs develop normally.

Any other questions?

Please call the paediatric outpatients department on 020 7288 5883.