

Jumper's Knee

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It is not uncommon for the knee joint, or all joints for that matter, to get stiff and sore after a long day in the gym or on the court. However, this is something that should resolve on its own and not last more than a day or so. If pain develops in one or both knees

during or after activity, and this pain lasts more than 48 hours, there may be something more serious going on.

One common problem, especially in basketball and volleyball players, is patellar tendonitis, a.k.a. jumper's knee. This is characterized by localized pain and inflammation at the patellar tendon just below the kneecap. The patellar tendon connects the patella (knee cap) to the tibia (shin bone). The patellar tendon is part of the extensor mechanism of the knee, which allows the knee to straighten when contracting the quadriceps (thigh) muscle. Overuse, such as repetitive jumping, is the most common cause of jumper's knee. The repetitive stress to the tendon causes tiny tears and an inflammatory process ensues. However, an acute injury can also lead to tendonitis if not managed properly or return to play is trialed too soon. Other causes include poor flexibility, hip or knee muscle weakness, poor alignment of the lower extremities,

or simply being out of shape. Signs and symptoms of jumper's knee include pain, tenderness, swelling, warmth, and redness over the patellar tendon and bony prominence below the kneecap. This may be associated with loss of strength, especially when trying to forcefully straighten the knee (as in jumping or going up/down stairs), and loss of motion.

It is important to appropriately warm up and stretch before physical activity and allow time for adequate rest and recovery. This, along with good hip and knee strength and flexibility, is the best way to prevent the development of knee tendonitis. See your physician if knee pain, tenderness, or swelling lasts more than 48 hours and seems to get worse during or after activity. The best cure for patellar tendonitis is an early diagnosis and appropriate treatment, which often times involves a period of rest, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs), and physical therapy.

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Sanford Wellness Center, 4201 S. Oxbow Ave.
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