



# Coping With Osgood-Schlatter Disease

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Osgood-Schlatter disease was named after Dr. Robert Osgood, a Boston radiologist, and Dr. Carl Schlatter, a Zurich surgeon. Both men independently published research describing the condition in 1903.

If your doctor diagnosed your knee pain as Osgood-Schlatter disease (OSD), you're not alone. OSD is common in active, rapidly growing adolescents generally between the ages of 8 and 13 for girls, and 10 and 15 for boys. It's a temporary condition that usually goes away within 12 to 24 months. During its course, various treatments can help you cope.

Simply taking a break from activity, applying heat or ice, and stretching may relieve some pain. Targeted exercises can strengthen bone, cartilage, and tendons in your knees and make you less susceptible to flare-ups. And if your symptoms are severe enough that you've had to wear a cast or brace, strengthening exercises can help you recover.

## What is OSD?

OSD is an inflammation (irritation) where the tendon from the patella, or kneecap, attaches to the tibia, or shinbone. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to OSD, because their bones grow rapidly. Any activity can cause OSD, but it's more common in sports that involve jumping and cutting, like basketball, volleyball, soccer, figure skating, and gymnastics.

## Typical OSD Symptoms Include:

- Frontal shin pain, 2 to 3 inches below the kneecap
- Swelling in the affected area
- Shinbone tenderness that only occurs while playing sports, or occurs constantly making participation impossible

## Treating the Pain

If your pain is mild, you can continue to participate in sports. Use a heating pad or warm, moist compresses at the site for 15 minutes before activity and/or use ice for 20 minutes after activity to help.

However, if symptoms are severe, you may need to take a total break from physical activities. Your doctor may prescribe a cast or brace, or he may recommend a good stretching program concentrating on quadriceps and hamstrings stretches to help relieve pain. If there's no improvement after 7 to 10 days, or if your symptoms worsen, consult your doctor.

Hold the following stretches for 10 seconds, and repeat 10 times for each leg, two - three times per day.



**Quadriceps stretch.** To stretch the quadriceps (the muscles in front of the thigh), lie stomach down and bend one knee. Using the hand on the same side as the bent knee, reach back and grab your ankle. Pull the foot downward until the heel is touching your buttock, if possible.

**Hamstring stretch.** The “hurdler’s stretch” works the hamstrings (in back of your thigh). Sit with one leg straight out in front, and the other leg bent, and lean forward, keeping your knee straight. Try to lean from your hips and keep your back fairly straight. You’ll feel a stretch in the back of your thigh.

If you’ve experienced severe pain, or required a brace or cast, you will need physical therapy to learn additional stretching and strengthening exercises. It is best to ease back into activity if you’ve had a prolonged time away from physical activity. Fortunately, most OSD patients grow out of the symptoms with little or no long-term consequences. ■

## Quick Facts About Osgood-Schlatter.

- The condition is most frequent in kids between 10-15 years old.
- Kids in sports have this condition 20% more often than nonathletes.
- The condition seems to run in families; when one child is affected, there's a 30% chance a sibling will have it too.
- Girls and boys are equally affected.
- Pain often worsens with activity and eases with rest.
- The condition is usually temporary.