

# VYPE

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# Pit Bulls In Poodle Suits

The Triangle's Queens of the Courts prove that being feminine means being strong, especially when they face off in a tough, close match that goes right down to the final point. Tiffany Williams, Cary Academy; Helen Wang, Green Hope; Ally Prior, Wakefield; Tamara Hill, East Chapel Hill; Hamilton Lovett, Broughton; Melis Tanik, Ravenscroft and Lauren Brooker, Cardinal Gibbons.

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# Health

## Addressing Knee Pain in Adolescents

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**A**s if adolescence isn't painful enough, this age group tends to suffer from sports-related knee issues. Most events place a great deal of stress on this part of the body, so it's not surprising that active, athletic youngsters often end up with some sort of knee pain or discomfort.

Often, knee pain occurs in the anterior or front part of the knee. The discomfort is particularly worse after the sports activity has ended. One typical example of anterior pain is an irritation under the kneecap called chondromalacia patella, which is due to softening of the cartilage.

Regardless of location, knee pain has many elements that influence its onset and severity in teenagers who play sports. Let's examine them in more detail.

### No Pain, No Gain?

Overuse of the knee is a main factor in causing pain among young athletes. The lack of downtime between seasons of different sports, such as going from participating in football to basketball, can predispose young athletes to injuries due to overuse of the knees. There is often not enough time to rest and recuperate the joints. Further, these athletes may not have the time to practice and recuperate from workouts. The muscles have to be retrained for different sports. When that does not occur, knee pain can result.

In some instances knee pain results from factors unique to a given sport in which the athletes participate. The harder the playing surface, the more likely knee injury is to occur. Certain sports that involve sudden starting and stopping movements for the legs, such as soccer, football and volleyball, make athletes more prone to knee pain as well.

Gender can play a factor in knee pain. Ligament injuries are more common in female athletes. All athletes are at risk, in particular cheerleaders. GO (away) Knee Pain! YAY! Another factor in adolescent knee pain is large body mass. The heavier an athlete, the greater the likelihood of sustaining knee pain due to the stress of the extra pounds.

### "You're growing like a weed..."

Additional sources for knee pain can be the result of the rapid growth phase an adolescent typically undergoes, and problems associated with other lower parts of the body, from the quadriceps to the feet. Sometimes knee pain is even associated with the hip. In rare cases, a hip problem may manifest only as knee pain.

### Controlling the Condition

Whatever the cause for the discomfort, knee pain is handled most effectively by employing rest for the joint and ice on the afflicted area. Over-the-counter, non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as naproxen and ibuprofen help as well.

A knee brace may be effective for controlling pain in certain conditions. So does strapping or taping knees, which can relieve muscular misalignment based on diagnosis.

If all of these measures do not alleviate the knee pain,

the athlete should consult a physician for a more thorough examination. Usually rehabilitation of the knee and reassessment is sufficient to alleviate all symptoms, but in some cases surgery may be required to address the discomfort.

### How to Prevent Knee Pain (Other than sitting on the bench!)

The most effective and efficient way to prevent knee pain from occurring in young athletes is to engage in a preventive program involving stretching and increasing flexibility of the lower extremities and pelvis. This program should follow the standard five to 15 minutes of low-impact warm-ups for athletes, and it should include 15 to 20 minutes of stretching for the pelvis, knees and ankles. Performed correctly, the improved strength and flexibility will guard against injury.

Other elements that can prevent pain involve one's sporting equipment. The athlete should wear well-fitting equipment that protects damage to the knee. High-quality socks and shoes designed appropriately for the sport can minimize the likelihood of a knee injury as well.

Parents with children involved in athletics should recognize that, despite having the best precautions in place, there are multiple causes of knee pain. When in doubt or when faced with persistent or debilitating symptoms, there is no substitute for evaluation and treatment by a specialist in orthopaedic surgery and sports medicine. The good news is that most of the time, this discomfort can be treated quickly and the adolescent athlete can get back into the game – or games!

### The following are signs for potential knee pain in youth:

1. Popping sound from the knee.
2. The knee catches and locks at certain points, making it unable to bend.
3. Persistence of swelling at the knee.
4. Instability in the knee.

These conditions can be signs of more than just knee pain, such as a cartilage tear, damage to ligaments or indicators of instability between muscle groups in the legs. Consult a doctor if they recur after knee pain treatment has been administered.

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