



Texas Orthopedics,
Sports & Rehabilitation Associates
www.txortho.com

Patellar Tracking: The Problem with Our Knees

Many women have a physical predisposition to having pain under and around their knee caps. It has to do with the shape of our legs. We were put together pretty well for having babies but not necessarily for playing sports or doing squats. And in the natural world we just didn't have to get in and out of chairs all day, or go up and down stairs all day, or have a squatting routine in the gym three days a week.

When I see a woman with pain around her knee caps, 8 out of 10 times I can get some kind of history of excessive stair climbing, bleacher running, or aerobic classes with lunges and squats!

Modify Activities

Stairs: The first thing I'm going to tell you to do is to modify the activities that hurt you. If it's climbing stairs, I'm going to tell you to diminish stair climbing or to somehow lessen the effect of stair climbing on your knees by using the banister. Take elevators and escalators rather than the stairs. Oh sure, stair climbing is exercise, but if you're having pain, trust me, the benefits don't outweigh the risks.

Chairs: You can't stop getting in and out of chairs, but you can use the arms of the chair to help push yourself out of the chair. Your knees will reap the benefits of a lifetime of decreasing this stress by pushing out of the chair.

Squats: I'm going to tell you to stop squats and frankly, my advice is to never do them again! Find another, less stressful way to strengthen your legs. Ride a stationary bike, swim or walk. These exercises are adequate for strengthening the legs on an average person.

Strengthening

I do want you to strengthen the muscle that helps control the movement of your knee cap. Here's a simple exercise: the straight leg raise.

Lay down on your bed. Don't get on the floor because then you'd have to do a squat to get up and down! If you're exercising your **right** leg you will bend your *left* leg in order to take some of the stress off your back. Then turn your right foot to the one o'clock position. So your whole leg will be turned slightly outward. Now raise the leg up off the bed about a foot and hold it there for a count. Then slowly bring it back down. When you're exercising the left leg you will turn it to 11 o'clock.

Do this 10 times on each leg and do at least 30 of them EVERY DAY!

Austin: Northwest
439-1000

Austin: Central
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Cedar Park
439-1009

Round Rock
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Bracing

Sometimes I will recommend a brace which helps align and support your knee cap temporarily. I may ask you to use this for a month or so while you start the exercises and activity modifications. Wear the brace during the day. Don't wear it to bed.

Keep the brace even after your pain is better. You never know when you'll need it again. Perhaps you'll use it specifically for activities you know will irritate your knee cap, like hiking on hills or climbing up and down ladders.

IMPORTANT! This condition is kind of like having a disease such as hypertension. It's something you will probably always be susceptible to having. And much like taking a pill for hypertension, your pain will likely come back if you stop treating the condition. Your exercises and activity modifications are like the anti-hypertensive medication. My recommendation is that you continue to do the exercises and modify the activities which aggravate your knee for *the rest of your life*, because the shape of your knee and the way it moves is part of you and will never change.