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Definition

By Mayo Clinic Staff

The cartilage under your kneecap is a natural shock absorber. Overuse, injury or other factors may lead to a condition known as chondromalacia patella (kon-droh-muh-LAY-shuh puh-TEL-uh) — a general term indicating damage to the cartilage under your kneecap. A more accurate term for chondromalacia patella is patellofemoral (puh-tel-o-FEM-uh-rul) pain syndrome.

The most common symptom is knee pain that increases when you walk up or down stairs. Simple treatments — such as rest and ice — often help, but sometimes physical therapy or even surgery is needed to ease patellofemoral pain.

Symptoms

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