Prepatellar Bursitis

The swollen, squishy lump on the front of the kneecap

Tips from your physiotherapist at Ace Sports Medicine

ACE SPORTS MEDICINE
UPPER MOUNT GRAVATT

The prepatellar bursa is a small fluid sac between the kneecap and the skin. Repetitive kneeling irritates it and it swells. Most cases settle once the kneeling stops. About one in three is infected, and telling the two apart is the key.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PREPATELLAR BURSITIS

1 WHAT IT IS

Inflammation of the fluid sac that cushions the kneecap against the skin. Repetitive kneeling or a direct blow irritates it, and the sac fills with fluid.

SWELLING ON THE KNEECAP, NOT INSIDE THE JOINT.

2 WHO GETS IT

About 80 percent of cases are men, with a peak age of 40 to 60. Tilers, floor-layers, plumbers, gardeners and anyone who kneels for a living are the usual patients.

THE OLD NAME IS HOUSEMAID'S KNEE FOR A REASON.

3 BURSA OR JOINT?

A bursa sits on top of the kneecap, is soft and mobile, and the knee usually still bends fully. Swelling inside the joint sits around and below the kneecap and limits bending.

KNEE STILL BENDS FULLY POINTS TO THE BURSA.

4 THE INFECTION QUESTION

About one third of cases are septic, meaning infected. A hot, red, increasingly painful bursa, a nearby skin break, or fever needs same-day medical review because infection can spread.

HOT, RED AND SPREADING IS A SAME-DAY JOB.

5 WHAT HELPS

Stop the kneeling load, use proper knee pads when kneeling is unavoidable, compress the swelling and elevate the leg. Aspiration or injection are options for persistent cases.

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF AND LET IT SETTLE.

6 PHYSIOTHERAPY

Quadriceps and hip strength, floor-to-stand technique and working positions that spread load away from the front of the knee, so it is less likely to return.

CHANGE HOW THE KNEE IS LOADED AT WORK.

DO I NEED A SCAN?

Not usually. The location, feel and history of the swelling usually make the diagnosis. Testing the fluid is considered when infection is suspected, and imaging is reserved for swelling that does not behave like a simple bursa.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Swelling lasting more than a couple of weeks
- Swelling that keeps returning with work
- The knee will not bend fully
- Unsure whether it is the bursa or the joint
- Swelling after a significant fall
- Hot, red, increasingly painful knee, a cut, or fever

A hot, red knee with fever or a skin break needs same-day medical care.

WHAT CAN A PHYSIOTHERAPIST DO?

- Confirm the swelling is the bursa, not the joint
- Screen for signs of infection and refer promptly
- Advise on knee pads, compression and load
- Build quadriceps and hip strength
- Coach floor-to-stand and kneeling technique
- Plan a return to work and sport

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

If you have an egg on the front of your kneecap, start here:

Stop kneeling on it for now | **Wear proper knee pads at work** | **Compress and elevate** | **Book a physio assessment**

Most non-infected cases settle once the kneeling stops. Please discuss specifics at an appointment.

Helping You Perform at Your Best

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Need support with a swollen kneecap?

Book your appointment today

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