

Orthopaedic Connection

Knee pain. Arthritis? Not Always

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How many conditions can cause knee pain, which is not arthritis?

Did anyone say six? Ok Smarty, what are they? Well, there are probably a lot more than six, but we don't want to get too technical or esoteric here. We will go over six of the common ones.

- **Gout**

It usually affects the big toe, but it can affect the knee(s) as well as ankles, hips, hands and elbows. Gout (high uric acid in the blood) is caused by an accumulation of tiny needle like crystals in the joint and in the connective tissue around it. Gout symptoms develop suddenly, usually overnight. An "attack" is triggered by certain medications, stress, eating cured meats and drinking alcohol. Episodes subside in three to ten days with or without treatment. Pain can be eased with anti-inflammatory medication, steroids and medications to lower uric acid in the blood.

- **Bursitis**

It is inflammation in fluid filled sacks around joints that aid motion. It can come on by itself or accompany arthritis or gout. Yes. Two at the same time! Bursitis pain is milder than arthritis or gout. Rest, medication and occasionally injection seem to take care of it.

- **Stress Fractures**

In older adults most stress fractures occur in the lower leg and knee pain can be a symptom. Dull aching, swelling or a tender spot are some of the signs. Plain x-rays, MRI or bone scan are needed to make a diagnosis.

- **Chondromalacia**

Rough places on the surface of the joint can develop slowly and are pre-arthritis in a sense. Its symptoms are aching pain, grinding and tenderness. It is often associated with torn cartilage.

- **Meniscus (cartilage) damage**

There are two in each knee. They are like little shock absorber discs between the bones. They can wear out and tear because of the

degenerative process of age. The joint may lock or give way, but usually it "just hurts". Arthroscopic surgery is the usual procedure to treat this.

- **Osteonecrosis**

A more unusual cause of knee pain caused by a small interruption in blood supply to the bone. It is thought to be caused by trauma, steroids or alcohol abuse. Symptoms vary from dull ache to severe pain. Diagnosis is by plain x-rays or MRI if needed. Arthroscopic surgery may be indicated to treat. It can lead to arthritis.

This has been a brief overview of some conditions that cause knee pain, which is not arthritis. Some are more common than others. Patients recognizing symptoms and knowing of the conditions that can mimic arthritis can aid in accurate diagnosis and effective treatment of your condition.

For the most part these conditions don't lend themselves to self-treatment. It is best to have it checked and properly diagnosed which can lead to effective treatment.

Log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection. You can learn lots more about all the knee conditions I treat in the office and the hospital. Take care of your knees.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush