

# How to Avoid Runner's Knee

By Dr. Jon DeGorter, Jonas Chiropractic Sports Injury Care



Your knees act as your body's shock absorbers, cushioning the impact with the ground, while converting those impact forces into energy and propulsion. Without good stability to support the bones, ligaments, tendons, and muscles surrounding the knee, the menisci and patella is thrown out of whack, causing pain and injury. Several factors including muscle weakness, tightness, and imbalances can affect your alignment, causing knee pain and swelling.

The vastus medialis is one of the quad muscles that helps stabilize your knee and keep it in line when you bend your knee. Located on the front of your thigh, above your kneecap, weakness in this or your other quadriceps muscles can cause pain and injury.

## Finding the source

Although you are feeling pain in your knee, often the cause lies elsewhere. Weakness in your hips and core, which control the movement of your pelvis and thighs, can put more stress on one side of your knees, affecting alignment. How your foot strikes the ground with each step can throw your knee off track. Weaknesses in muscles that stabilize your lower leg and flex your toes can also contribute to knee pain. It is important to trace back to the root cause of the pain, and then focus on correcting it.

## Treatment

For mild cases of knee pain, you can try home treatment with ice, anti-inflammatories like ibuprofen or naproxen, and scale back on your training. Taping or knee braces can help, but work best when combined with a stretching program. If knee pain lingers for more than two weeks, worsens during or after exercise, or interferes with the way you walk or run, it's time to have it checked out by a sports injury specialist. The faster you get treated, the faster you'll recover.

## Preventing Runner's Knee

To help stabilize and prevent injury to the knee, you should strengthen the muscles around your knee. An exercise that isolates your vastus medialis is the floor extension. Sit on the floor with a tall posture. Bend your left knee toward your chest with your foot flat on the floor. Extend your right leg out in front of you. Hold under your left knee with both hands and keep your right quad flexed. Without losing your posture, lift your right leg up as high as you can. Slowly bring your right leg down. Do 3-4 sets of 12 repetitions.

Adding strength training to your routine as well as stretches will help prevent runner's knee. A strong core and hips will help avoid many potential injuries. Exercises that can help include planks, clamshells, the bridge, and side leg lifts. An important and often overlooked preventative measure is listening to your body, paying attention to any pain, tightness or soreness, and having any nagging, persistent aches and pains checked out.

If you are experiencing persistent knee pain and home remedies have lost their effectiveness, seek treatment and have your injury evaluated. It is important to pinpoint the factors that are contributing to the injury and devise a corresponding treatment plan. While physical therapy focuses on strength and coordination, chiropractic sports injury care also improves joint mobilization, ensuring that all the joints are moving correctly in coordination with muscles and soft tissue. Just as every runner is unique, every injury has different causes. The key is finding the specific area of tension and tightness in the hips, quadriceps, low back or abdominal muscles and getting that area to move better, along with strengthening and stabilizing the hip, knee, foot and lower leg.

**Active Release Technique®** and **Graston Technique®** involve intense active movement-based massage treatment, which sets it apart from passive massage or physical therapy. **ART** and **GT** promote faster recovery, restoration of normal tissue function and prevents future injury. **Active Release Technique** and **Graston Technique** release the buildup of dense scar tissue which allows tissue to heal in the correct patterns to restore normal function and increase performance.

The techniques and therapy provided by **Jonas Chiropractic Sports Injury Care** are natural and non-invasive and have successfully helped many athletes come back faster from injury and return to pain-free running.

---

*Dr. Jon DeGorter is part of the Jonas Chiropractic Sports Injury Care team. Dr. Jon specializes in treating runners and triathletes. He is well versed in injury prevention and rehabilitation — keeping athletes doing what they like to do!*