

Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD)

Osteochondritis dissecans is a type of joint condition where a piece of the cartilage, as well as a thin layer of the bone underneath it, comes loose from the bone's end. The condition often occurs in younger men, especially when an injury occurs to the joint. Even though the condition is commonly found in the knee, the ankle and other joints can be affected.

The bone at the end of the joint tends to become detached due to a loss of blood supply. However the bone may not become detached.

If the loose piece of bone and cartilage stays close to the detached site, you might have little to no symptoms, and the fracture ends up healing on its own. Surgical repair might be needed when fragments come loose and end up getting caught in the moving joint parts. Surgery is also required for those with persistent pain.

The cause of osteochondritis dissecans is unknown, but it typically affects boys ages 9 to 18 years old. The symptoms include joint pain at that site, stiffness in the area, or even locking of the joint. It is diagnosed on X-ray or MRI scan, and is very hard to pick up due to a) its rarity and b) it can mimic other far more common problems.

How to Treat Osteochondritis Dissecans:

1. Rest the Joint

Avoid any activities that place stress on the joints, such as running or jumping. It might be necessary to use crutches for a certain amount of time, especially when the pain forces you to limp. It might also be recommended that you wear a brace to keep the knee immobilized for a few weeks.

2. Physical Therapy

Most of the time, this type of therapy includes movement and stretching exercises, as well as strengthening exercises for those muscles supporting the joint involved. Physical therapy is often recommended following surgery.

3. Surgery

If traditional treatments don't work for three to six months, you might have to undergo surgery to get the loose fragments out or to reattach those fragments to your bone. Based upon the fragment size, or the miniscule fractures within the bone that underlies the fragment, surgery might have to be used to attempt to fill that defect with cartilage that contains bundles of fibrocartilage.

Tips:

- Children who participate in organized sports might benefit from education about the risks associated with their joints when they are overused.
- Learning the proper techniques for specific sports and exercises can help to reduce the likelihood of injury occurring.
- Men are more likely to develop the condition than females are.
- The condition often occurs in those who are between 10 and 20, with average age being 11.
- Sports involving throwing, jumping and rapid direction changes increases the risk of getting the condition.