

Plica Syndrome

Plica syndrome is a rare knee condition that is the result of leftover fetal tissue in the knee. The synovial plica is actually a number of membranes separating the knee into various compartments during fetal development. Normally, these plica will diminish in size in the second trimester of development. In adults, they are synovial folds. In certain individuals, the plica tends to be more prominent, which makes it prone to irritation.

Located on the inner side of the knee, the synovial tissue is the most prone to injuries and irritation. Whenever the knee is bent, the plica is exposed to direct injury. It can also be injured from overusing the joint. Whenever the plica becomes inflamed and irritated, plica syndrome develops.

Plica Syndrome Anatomy

The knee is one of the biggest and most complex of all joints found in the body. It joins the shin bone and the thigh bone together. The smaller bone running alongside of the tibia and the kneecap are the two other bones that complete the knee joint. Tendons keep the leg muscles and knee bones connected to enable the knee joint to move. Ligaments join all of the knee bones and deliver stability to the knee.

The anterior cruciate ligament is the one that prevents the femur (leg bone) from sliding backward along the tibia. The medial and lateral collateral ligaments make sure the femur doesn't slide from one side to the other. It is the posterior cruciate ligament that prevents the femur from sliding forward along the tibia.

Plica literally means "fold" in Latin. This fold of synovial tissue can become trapped between the femur and the patella. Pain is most commonly felt on the inside front area of the knee.

How to Treat Plica Syndrome:

1. Anti-Inflammatory Medication

Plica syndrome is often treated using an anti-inflammatory medication. Most of the time, the medication can help to relieve pain and inflammation in the affected area. An injection might also prove helpful to treating the pain in the knee.

2. Rest or Reduce Activity

Refrain from any activities that are causing you pain. Allowing the knee to rest can help to improve upon the current state of the plica syndrome.

3. Therapy

Physiotherapy and osteopathy can help to reduce pain in the back of the knee. It can also help to improve range of mobility in the knee joint and reduce any swelling.

4. Surgery

If the aforementioned methods don't help to alleviate the symptoms, you might have to surgically remove the plica. The procedure is performed using an arthroscope inserted into the knee, as well as small surgical instruments, to remove any tissue that is inflamed and irritated. Assuming plica is the cause of these symptoms, plica resection has shown great results. Unless the symptoms are consistent with plica syndrome and the plica appears irritated and inflamed, the plica is often left alone. Re-sectioning is only done when the plica is the main cause of the problems.

Tips:

- Plica syndrome is rare, so make sure you have ruled out other more common knee injuries first.
- Sports requiring forceful, repeated bending or straightening of the knee increase the risk of plica syndrome.
- Suffering repeated injuries to the knee leaves you susceptible to plica syndrome.
- If you sit for long periods of time, get up and walk around every hour for five minutes or so to keep the joints moving.
- Try applying ice to the affected knee for 5-10 minutes at a time to help alleviate some of the pain and inflammation.