



**United States Military Academy**  
**Sports Medicine-Physical Therapy Services**  
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*“Academic, Research, and Clinical Excellence”*

## Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome

The patellofemoral joint is the joint formed between the patella (knee cap) and the femur (leg bone). Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome (PFPS) is a common overuse injury of the knee. PFPS can result from excessive pressure between the patella and the femur. The joint becomes irritated and can affect many activities.

### Symptoms

The primary symptom of PFPS is pain behind the kneecap with prolonged sitting, while climbing stairs, and running. You may also experience a grating or grinding in the knee.

### Causes

PFPS is an overuse injury that may be exacerbated by the following:

1. Training errors such as running too many miles on improper surfaces
2. Poor footwear
3. Biomechanical faults of the knee
4. Biomechanical faults of the feet
5. Muscle imbalances from tight or weak muscles (often the quadriceps)

### Treatment

1. Relative rest: If possible, avoid activities that aggravate your symptoms
2. Control inflammation:
  - a. Ice daily for 20 minutes.
  - b. Medication - non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication may be prescribed.
3. Stretch tight muscles: Your Physical Therapist will evaluate your flexibility and recommend appropriate exercises to improve your flexibility
4. Strengthen weak muscles: Your Physical Therapist will evaluate your strength and muscle balance and recommend appropriate exercises to improve your strength if necessary
5. Perform alternative aerobic training to maintain fitness and conditioning (i.e., biking, swimming)



- **Based off of the findings of your exam your physical therapist will help you develop a well-balanced treatment plan that meets your specific needs.**