



KNEE JOINT INFLAMMATION – A PAIN IN THE KNEE

It can happen to anyone without age discrimination. Your knee begins to stiffen—especially after physical activity—and suddenly the body’s largest joint can no longer do its job. The knee cap area appears swollen or puffy and when it bends, pain ensues.

The condition is knee effusion, more commonly referred to as water on the knee.

“It means that there is some type of inflammatory process occurring in the knee joint. Excess fluid builds up around the knee joint and swelling occurs, bringing pain,” said Suzanne Graziano, NCH Director of Orthopedics and Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging and Rehabilitation.

“There are many probable causes such as recent trauma or overuse of the joint, especially in those who play tennis or golf daily or engage in other sports and who do not cross-train their bodies, thereby placing a great deal of stress on the joint.”

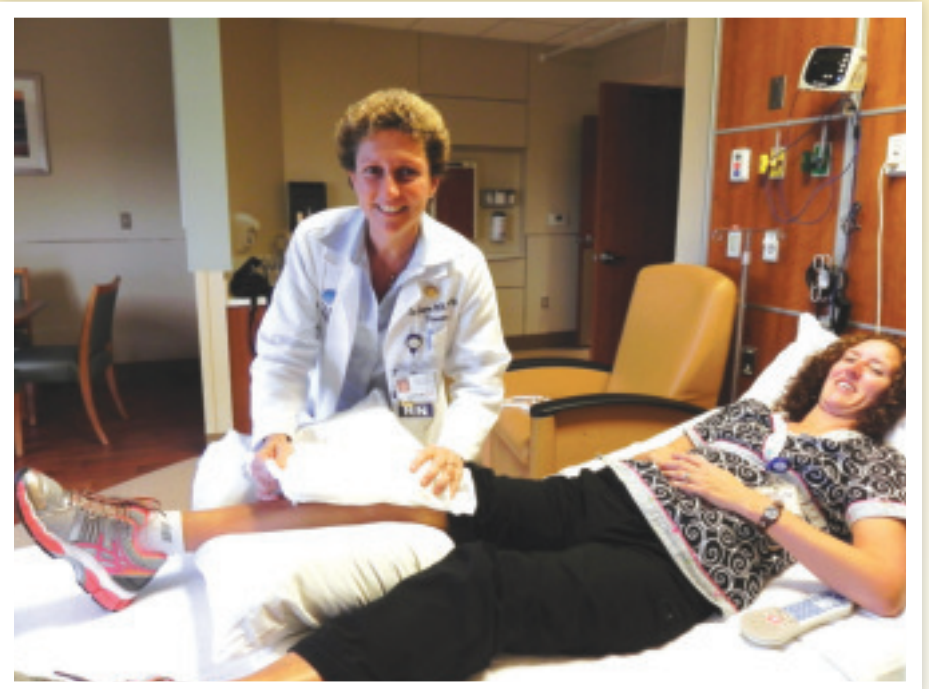
Other underlying conditions may include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, infection or gout. In people who are overweight, heavy strain on the joint, over time, may cause more wear and tear resulting in an inflammatory process.

If you are suffering with this problem, a visit to a healthcare practitioner or orthopedist is in order. A complete medical history will be taken to determine the onset of the pain and swelling and whether or not it began after physical activity or if it was the result of an injury or trauma to the knee.

A physical exam is then performed and, if needed, further testing may be necessary: an X-ray can tell if a break or dislocation is evident or a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) can detect tears in the ligaments, tendons or cartilage. A blood test may also be ordered, especially if the area is red and tender to the touch that may indicate an infection.

“There are several good home remedies as first aid for the condition. First, stop the aggravating activity and rest. Elevate the leg above heart level and apply ice packs for 15-20 minute sessions as needed,” said Graziano. “You can also use packages of frozen peas or corn as ice packs. Just place them into a pillowcase or wrap them with a towel and they make great cold packs.”

The use of over the counter non steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn) or Aspirin can also bring relief while awaiting an appointment with your healthcare provider.



Suzanne Graziano demonstrates a first aid measure for relieving the pain of knee effusion with the assistance of NCH nurse Susan Riviere.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF KNEE EFFUSION

- Pain when the knee is moved
- Swelling or puffiness around knee cap
- Stiffness of knee joint
- Difficulty in straightening or bending the knee

PREVENTION OF KNEE EFFUSION

- Avoid sudden jolting movements
- Avoid rough running surfaces
- Perform small knee bend exercises
- Choose less joint-stressing sports

