

# How to Care for a Swollen Knee (And When to Seek Help)

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When excess fluid accumulates on or around the knee joint, it swells. Doctors call it an effusion and some people call it water on the knee. Sometimes, the swelling and the pain that comes with it will go away with some treatment at home. Other times, a doctor will need to treat it.

## Symptoms of a Swollen Knee

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- The skin around the kneecap is puffy
- The knee is stiff and it's difficult to bend or straighten it
- It's painful and bearing weight is difficult or impossible
- Redness or warmth

Chronic or swelling that does not go away can lead to joint damage, cartilage degradation, or bone softening.

## What Causes a Swollen Knee

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Injuries, including damage to the ligaments, especially the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) cause fluid to build up around the knee. Tearing the cartilage, overuse, and breaking bones can also cause fluid buildup.

Underlying conditions like osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, infection, gout, pseudogout, bursitis, cysts, and tumors can also cause swelling.

## Home Treatment for Swollen Knees

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If okay with your doctor, over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications can treat minor cases of knee swelling. Usually, these cases are knee osteoarthritis, non-septic knee bursitis, or a minor injury.

The RICE formula can also work. RICE is rest, ice, compression, and elevation. Rest for a period of 24 hours or longer to give the joint time to recover. Icing for 20 minutes three to four times each day can decrease swelling and help with healing. Do not put ice directly on the skin.

Wrapping the knee with an elastic bandage can help limit swelling, but make sure it's not too tight. Finally, elevate the knee to help reduce blood flow to the area which will hopefully reduce swelling.

With RICE, swelling often goes down in one to three days.

## When to See a Doctor

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If the swelling doesn't go down in one to three days of using the RICE method, it's time to call a doctor.

Also, call a doctor immediately if there are any of these symptoms:

- The knee is severely swollen or has a pronounced abnormality
- The knee cannot fully straighten or flex
- The knee is severely painful
- The knee feels like it will give out or cannot support any weight at all
- The skin near the knee is hot or red
- A fever
- Swelling has not gone down after three or more days

If you're experiencing knee swelling that will not go away or have pain, connecting with a specialist is always a good idea. There's no need to rush into surgery. At Flexogenix, we specialize in cutting-edge, non-surgical treatment options, and can help you move past achy

knees and into your best life—without invasive surgery. [Contact us](#) today to schedule your free consultation.