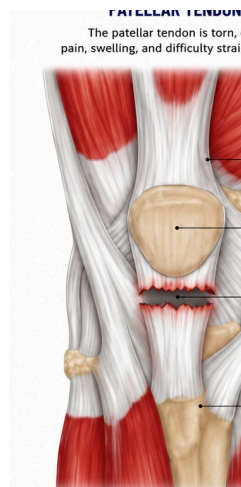


KNEE CONDITION

Patellar Tendon Tear

Patellar Tendon Rupture — Patient Condition Guide



A patellar tendon tear — for education; your anatomy may differ

OVERVIEW

The patellar tendon connects the bottom of the kneecap (patella) to the shinbone (tibia) and is what lets you straighten your knee. A complete tear (rupture) usually happens during a forceful landing, a fall onto a bent knee, or a sudden load on the leg. When it tears completely, you cannot straighten the knee or hold the leg straight, and prompt evaluation is important.

ANATOMY

The patellar tendon is part of the knee's extensor mechanism — the quadriceps muscles, quadriceps tendon, kneecap, and patellar tendon working as one unit to straighten the knee. A tear breaks this chain, and the kneecap often rides high because it is no longer anchored to the shin.

SYMPTOMS

- A pop or tearing sensation at the time of injury
- Pain and swelling just below the kneecap
- Inability to straighten the knee or do a straight-leg raise
- A kneecap that sits higher than normal
- Difficulty walking or a buckling, unstable knee

DIAGNOSIS

Dr. Pettit examines the extensor mechanism for a gap below the kneecap and an inability to straighten the knee. X-rays show whether the kneecap rides high (patella alta), and MRI or ultrasound confirms the tear and its location.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

A complete patellar tendon tear is treated with surgical repair — the tendon is reattached to the kneecap, usually with sutures anchored to bone — and is best done promptly for the strongest result. Small partial tears with an intact extensor mechanism may be managed in a brace with therapy.

RECOVERY TIMELINE

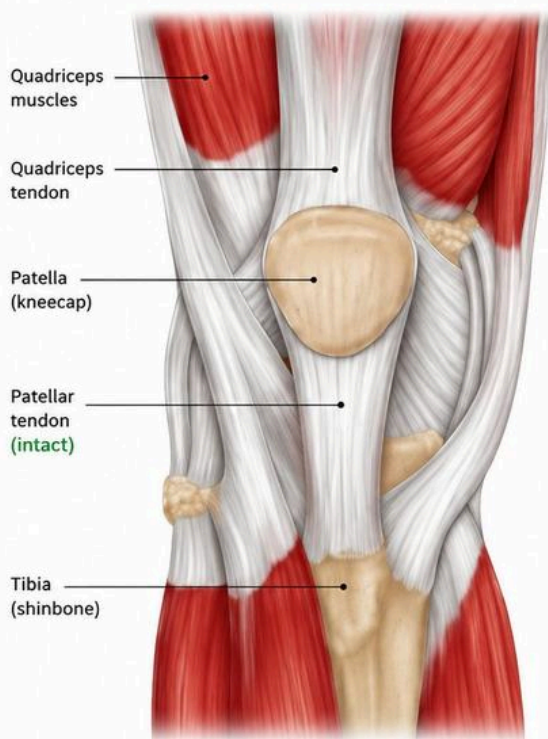
After repair you will be in a brace locked straight with protected weight-bearing. Physical therapy gradually restores bending as the tendon heals, followed by strengthening. Most patients return to full activity around 4–6 months, guided by strength and motion.

PATELLAR TENDON TEAR

The patellar tendon connects the bottom of the kneecap (patella) to the shinbone (tibia) and helps straighten the knee.

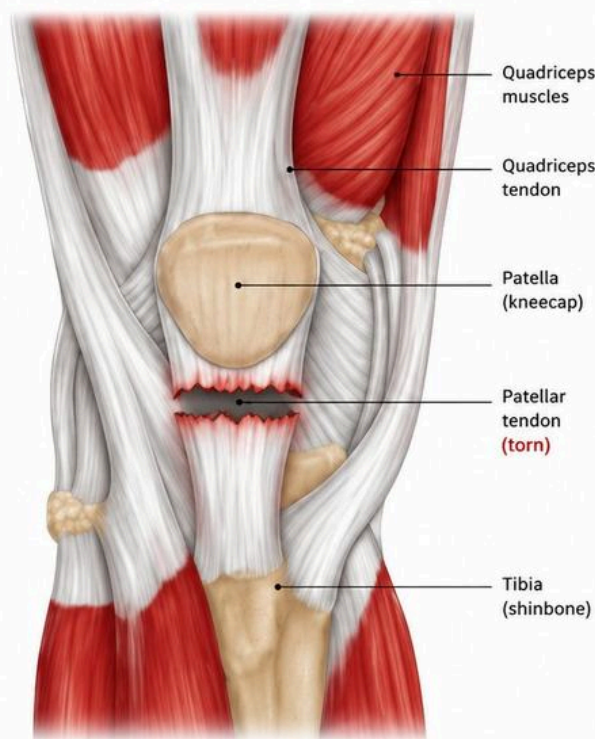
NORMAL PATELLAR TENDON

The patellar tendon is intact.



PATELLAR TENDON TEAR

The patellar tendon is torn, often causing pain, swelling, and difficulty straightening the knee.



Patellar tendon tear — normal vs. torn · for education; your anatomy may differ



SCAN FOR THE LATEST VERSION ONLINE

robertpettitmd.com/handouts/patellar-tendon-tear.pdf

This handout is for general patient education and does not replace personalized medical advice. Always follow the specific instructions given by Dr. Pettit and your care team.