



## What The Heck Is Chondromalacia?

If someone told you that you had chondromalacia, you would probably be very worried thinking it was a contagious disease or perhaps something that would cause an untimely death. In fact, it is a very common condition in the body which is probably most well known for its occurrence in the knee joint. As we have pointed out in other articles in the On Line Orthopaedics Library, the articular cartilage of the joint is a thick, somewhat rubbery, durable surface which covers the ends of all of the bones that are a true gliding joint. When the surface tissue or hyaline or articular cartilage as it is called, becomes damaged or roughened, the term usually applied to it medically is "chondromalacia". This literally means softening of the cartilage.

However, the cartilage tissue surface does not just become soft, but can become very rough and become worn very thin - even to the point where the underlying bone is exposed.

In the first stage of chondromalacia, which is seen for example with arthroscopic knee surgery, the surface of the joint has a slightly furry appearance. The friction caused by this change is tremendously greater than the friction normally present in a healthy joint, which is less than wet ice.

Chondromalacia can begin without any apparent injury to the joint. Frequently, however, there may be a history of some type of injury, which could damage the articular surface of the joint.

When that occurs, further deterioration can be expected over time. The time frame is very uncertain, however, and can take months or even years to progress.

Eventually it would cause a grinding sensation in the joint, which is referred to as crepitation. This is not always painful and in the early stages, frequently would not be painful. Eventually as the chondromalacia becomes more severe, it can be painful and even disabling. In the knee joint, for example, it can cause difficulty in walking - particularly on stairs - difficulty getting up from a seated position as well as pain if the joint is jarred or bumped.

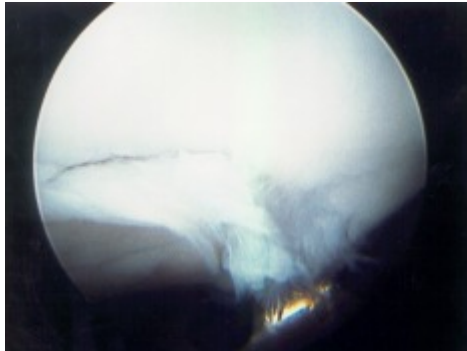
It would be entirely correct to think of the various stages of chondromalacia as a pre-arthritis situation, which could lead eventually to pain and stiffness in the joint.

Chondromalacia, while it is a benign condition, can be disabling. In the knee joint it is often treated with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication, physical therapy, Glucosamine and Chondroitin supplements, and in more severe cases causing pain, could be treated with visco supplementation injections. Arthroscopic Surgery is an option if other measures have failed to afford relief.

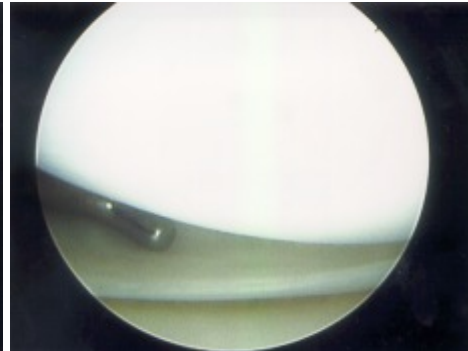


# Online Orthopaedics

Medical Article



Chondromalacia



Normal Joint Surface



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