Plica Inflammation

Description
The plica is a fold of joint lining (synovial tissue) that is a remnant of tissue from embryologic development. During embryologic development, bands of tissue divide the limbs into joints. These bands may persist into adulthood in up to 60% of people. These bands may become thickened and inflamed, causing varying symptoms.

Common signs and symptoms
- Pain in the or toward the inside of the knee, especially when kneeling, squatting, sitting for long periods or rising from a sitting position. It may also occur when walking or running up or down stairs or hills.
- Catching, locking and clicking of the knee.
- Pain and tenderness under the kneecap (patella).

Causes
- Direct trauma to the knee.
- Repetitive bending and straightening of the knee can cause the plica to thicken.

Risk for further injury
- Sports that require repeated, forceful straightening or bending of the knee (such as kicking and jumping).
- Repeated injuries to the knee.
- Sports in which the knee may receive direct injury (volleyball, soccer, football) or that require prolonged kneeling.

Initial treatment
Initial treatment consists of medications and ice to relieve pain and reduce inflammation, stretching and strengthening exercises for the hamstrings and quadriceps, and modification of the activity that produces the symptoms. These may be carried out at home, although occasionally referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer may be prescribed.

Your physician may recommend an injection of cortisone to reduce the inflammation of the plica. Arch supports may also be recommended. Surgery is not usually necessary – it is usually reserved for cases in which symptoms persist despite conservative treatment. Surgery to remove the plica is usually performed arthroscopically on an outpatient basis and you will return home the same day).
Medication
Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as aspirin, naproxen sodium, and ibuprofen may be taken to relieve pain, but do not take these within seven days prior to your surgery. Other minor pain relievers such as Tylenol®/acetaminophen are often recommended. Take these as directed by your physician. Contact your physician immediately if any bleeding, upset stomach or signs of an allergic reaction occur.

Pain relievers may be prescribed by your physician. Use only as directed and only as much as you need. Topical ointments may also be beneficial.

Heat and cold
Cold is used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation for acute and chronic cases. Cold should be applied for the first 72 hours after initial injury – apply it for 10 to 15 minutes every two to three hours to help relieve inflammation and pain. Also apply cold immediately after any activity that aggravates your symptoms. Use ice packs or an ice massage.

Heat may be used before performing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your physician, physical therapist or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or a warm soak. Do not use heat if swelling is present.

Notify our office if...

- Symptoms get worse or do not improve in four to six weeks despite treatment.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. The drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

Please call 859-323-5533 with questions or for more information.