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Patellar Dislocation Assessment

Patient information for kneecap dislocation and instability

The patella is the kneecap. A dislocation occurs when it moves out of its groove; instability may feel as though it slips or could give way.

A kneecap that is still out of place needs urgent medical care. This guide is for follow-up assessment after the initial injury has been treated, or for recurring instability.

This information is general only and does not replace personalised medical advice. Your assessment, treatment options and recovery plan may differ. Andy Thompson's clinic is not an urgent or emergency service. For medical emergencies, call 111.

Urgent concerns: For new or worsening symptoms requiring urgent assessment, contact your GP, an urgent care provider, or your nearest emergency department.

What assessment may cover

- The first injury, any further episodes, swelling and confidence in the knee.
- Examination of kneecap movement, knee alignment and stability.
- Review of X-rays or MRI where appropriate, including possible cartilage or bone injury.
- Previous rehabilitation, brace use and your work or activity goals.

Treatment options

- After initial care, a first dislocation is often managed with rehabilitation and sometimes a brace.
- Rehabilitation aims to improve strength, knee control and confidence.
- Repeated dislocations, ongoing instability or associated damage may prompt discussion of surgical options.
- Benefits, risks and recovery requirements are considered individually before treatment decisions.

Useful information to bring

- Emergency-care notes, imaging reports and details of previous dislocations or treatment.
- A medication list, allergies, and ACC claim or insurance details if relevant.
- Questions about further episodes, rehabilitation, work and sport.

Prepared for Andy Thompson's patients and referrers. Updated October 2026.