Dislocated Patella (Knee Cap)

You have had a dislocated patella. This happens when the knee cap slides to the outside of the knee. Sometimes it comes back on its own. Sometimes manipulation is needed to relocate the patella. This injury tears the muscle and tendon connections to the knee cap along the inside of the knee. Other knee problems can happen with patellar dislocation. These include:

- Poor healing of the tissues with a lax joint
- Repeated dislocations
- Damage to the joint cartilage
- Fractures of the bone and cartilage

Patellar dislocations can be reduced by straightening the knee, and pushing gently on the knee cap. You can move it back into normal position. A splint is normally applied after the knee cap is put back in place. Keep this on until you see your caregiver in 1-2 weeks. Pack your knee in ice for 20-30 minutes every few hours (longer periods if you are in a cast).

If this is the first time this has happened, do not use your knee too soon. It takes 4-6 weeks for this injury to heal properly. Surgical treatment to tighten up the knee may be needed if the knee cap keeps dislocating. See your caregiver for proper follow-up and help with rehabilitation.

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