



## Chondromalacia

### What is chondromalacia?

By Jonathan Cluett, M.D., About.com

"Chondromalacia patella is a common cause of kneecap pain or anterior knee pain. Often called "Runner's Knee," this condition often affects young, otherwise healthy athletes.

Chondromalacia is due to an irritation of the undersurface of the kneecap. The undersurface of the kneecap, or patella, is covered with a layer of smooth cartilage. This cartilage normally glides effortlessly across the knee during bending of the joint. However, in some individuals, the kneecap tends to rub against one side of the knee joint, and the cartilage surface become irritated, and knee pain is the result. "

### PRTriCoach

Okay, here is my story:

Over the last 5 years or so I have battled Chondromalacia, or "Runner's Knee", in my right knee. I have had three orthopedic surgeons diagnose the condition, but fortunately have not had any surgical procedures yet. I have always been able to continue running, biking, etc. One strange thing is that bicycling usually bothers my knee more than running.

I have taken many measures to manage the condition. Here are a few: rest, ice, anti-inflammatory drugs, run-gait analysis, saddle height adjustments, cleat placement changes, fore/ aft saddle position adjustments, stretching, weight training, eliminating downhill running, moderation of speed work and racing, etc.

Well, the solution for me was very basic and something I should have thought of years ago...crank length! On the two bikes I ride the most often – cross bike and mtn bike – I was forced to choose between 170mm and 175mm cranks. I am 5'10" with long legs, so 175mm cranks are usually a good choice. Recently I switched to 170mm cranks and immediately I had less pain in my knee. After one week the pain in my knee is almost gone; my Achilles even feels better.

I do not want to debate the performance pros and cons of longer vs. shorter cranks. For me, it's as simple as this: shorter cranks have brought back the joy of cycling for me!

Coach Lee