

Osteitis Pubis Treatment Guidelines

Osteitis pubis refers to a groin injury characterized by inflammation of the pubic symphysis (the joint between the left and right pubic bones) and surrounding soft tissues. Patients typically present with groin pain that worsens with physical activity.

It is crucial that patients do not engage in any activity that might aggravate the symptoms when they have been diagnosed with osteitis pubis. This activity might worsen the injury and delay recovery.

Initial steps

Immediately following an injury to the groin, patients should:

- Rest and minimize walking
- Ice the injury for 15 minutes every 2-3 hours to reduce swelling
- Cease physical activity as soon as groin pain is reported. It's crucial that the patient does not try to 'play through the pain!'
- Be referred to a physical therapist, who will perform a physical examination and differential diagnosis and begin to formulate a treatment plan. Patients may also be referred for radiographs or other scans to confirm their diagnosis (e.g. a pelvic anterior-posterior radiograph of the pubic symphysis)
- Take over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen or naproxen
- If the patient is experiencing significant pain, their doctor might prescribe prescription-strength pain relief medication or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

It is important not to delay seeking treatment after the injury or re-injury to the groin. Early diagnosis of osteitis pubis is key to a quick recovery.

Treatment options

Conservative management

Most cases of osteitis pubis can be effectively treated using non-invasive conservative management strategies. Most patients will make a full recovery within six months.

1. Physical therapy

Physical therapy is particularly crucial to recovery as it can help correct faulty movement patterns or muscle imbalances that may have originally contributed to the injury.

The specialist will develop a personalized physical therapy plan that includes exercises designed to gradually rebuild strength in the musculature surrounding the injury. This plan will likely incorporate core and lumbopelvic exercises, as well as progressive adductor strengthening, though specific exercises will vary based on individual needs. Patients may be required to complete these exercises at home on a daily basis.

Following the treatment plan provided by the physical therapist is essential for a successful recovery.

2. Graduated return to physical activity

The specialist will create a comprehensive rehabilitation program to help the patient gradually return to sports and other physical activities. Based on progress, this program may be adjusted as treatment continues. To prevent reinjury, it is essential that the patient follows this program and avoids doing too much too soon.

Attempting a premature return to physical activity can exacerbate athletic osteitis pubis and delay full recovery. Continued use of an injured pubic symphysis may lead to chronic osteitis pubis. As physical activity is reintroduced, the physical therapist may also recommend stretching or warm-up routines to complete beforehand, which can effectively reduce the risk of re-injury.

Surgical intervention

In some rare cases, osteitis pubis symptoms will not resolve using conservative treatment alone. If symptoms persist beyond six months, surgical intervention may be required. Endoscopic pubic symphysectomy is a common surgical procedure used to treat severe or chronic osteitis pubis cases as it is minimally invasive.

Other therapies

Other therapies may be available for severe or chronic cases of osteitis pubis. Note that these are not a substitute for physical therapy and are typically reserved for elite athletes who need to return to physical activity quickly.

1. Corticosteroid injections

In some cases, ultrasound-guided steroid injections may be prescribed to help reduce pain and inflammation associated with osteitis pubis. These have long-acting anti-inflammatory properties and can be effective in pain relief for up to three months.

2. Shock wave therapy

Emerging evidence suggests that shock wave therapy, a noninvasive treatment, can also expedite the healing process of osteitis pubis. Although this treatment is typically uncomfortable, it can reduce the pain associated with osteitis pubis faster than rest.

References

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