

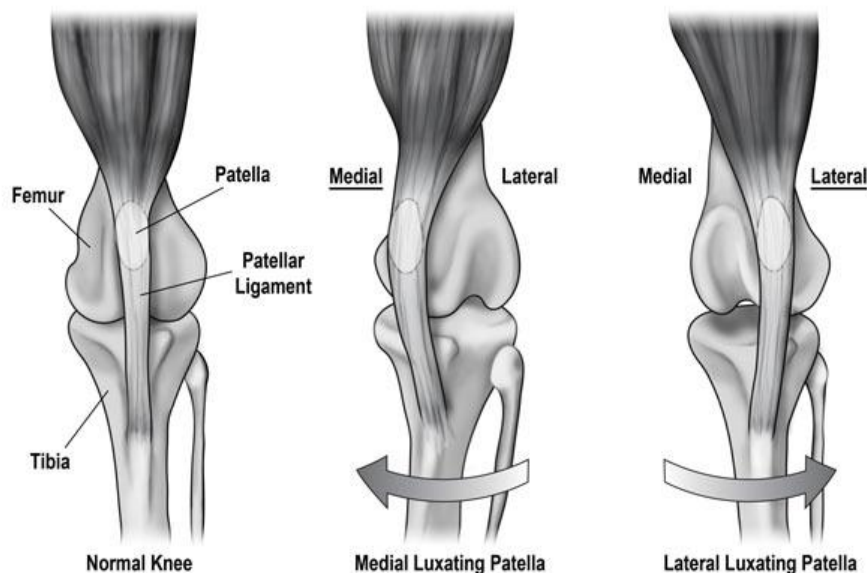
Luxated Patella

The kneecap moves up and down in a groove. Patella Ridges hold the kneecap in place, and as long as the ridges are deep the kneecap can only move up and down as nature intended.

Unfortunately, some dog breeds have a very flat patella ridge. This means the kneecap doesn't seat snugly in the groove and it can pop out medially (to the inside) or laterally (to the outside). Typically in larger dogs, the kneecap pops to the outside, while smaller dogs' kneecaps tend to pop to the inside.

A genetic predisposition to luxating patellas occurs in a variety of small and tiny dogs, including:

- Miniature and Toy Poodles
- Maltese
- Jack Russell Terriers
- Yorkies
- Pomeranians
- Pekingese
- Chihuahuas
- Papillions
- Boston Terriers



There are four levels of severity of a luxating patella. Grade 1 is the mildest; Grade 4 is the most severe.

- **Grade 1** describes a kneecap that pops out (or can be manually popped out of place), but pops right back in on its own.
- **Grade 2** describes a kneecap that pops out of place and doesn't always pop back in automatically, sometimes requiring manual manipulation to re-seat it.
- **Grade 3** condition is when the kneecap sits outside its groove most of the time, but can be manually positioned back in the groove, where it stays temporarily.
- **Grade 4** describes the worst-case scenario, in which the kneecap sits outside the groove all the time, and won't stay seated in the groove when it is manually popped into place.

Is it painful?

Often in young dogs with strong, resilient joint cartilage, the patella can pop out and back in without obvious signs of pain. There may be an intense jolt of pain as the kneecap moves across the patella ridge, but it's gone in a flash and usually not obvious to an observer. The dog won't want to put weight on his leg until the kneecap has popped back in (which can cause another flash of pain), but otherwise he appears fine. Ultimately, however, as the cartilage wears down from the frequent travel of the kneecap in and out of its groove, there will be bone-to-bone contact and the condition can become acutely painful for your pup.

Surgical Correction

The normal groove in the femur is lined by slippery lubricated cartilage, called hyaline cartilage. This cartilage is peeled or cut away, the bone underneath is sliced out to form a deeper groove, and the cartilage is replaced. We recommend doing one leg at a time, 8 weeks or more apart, is beneficial as the patient will have one good rear leg upon which to walk.