

What are Growing Pains?

Growing pains are a common childhood condition typically peaking between the ages of 3 and 7.

Although they are called growing pains there is no evidence that the growth of bones causes pain. Most likely the pain is related to overuse of the muscles or connective tissue during the day.

Growing pains don't affect growth and do not cause other or future problems. They usually last a year or two and the frequency and severity of pain typically decreases with time.

Causes

The cause for growing pains is unknown.

- It can run in families and may be associated with other conditions.

Symptoms

Growing pains are usually described as an achy or throbbing pain in the legs, calves or thighs.

- Growing pains tend to affect both legs and may be worse after the child has had an especially active day.
- The pain tends to occur at night just before or after the onset of sleep or may wake a child from a deep sleep.
- The frequency of symptoms is variable and may occur once a month, week or several days during a week.

Understanding Your Child's Growing Pains

The doctor diagnoses growing pains based on your symptoms and clinical examination.

X-rays may be ordered by your doctor to rule out other problems.



Treatment Options

Although there is no specific treatment for growing pains there are several things parents can do to help relieve their child's symptoms.

These include: gentle massages, heat, and medication.

Gentle Massage

Rubbing your child's legs gently often makes them feel better

Heat

Use a heating pad on low or a warm moist towel on the legs. A warm bath before bed or after symptoms start can also be helpful.

Medication

Taking anti-inflammatory medicine or NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as Motrin, Advil, Naproxen or Aleve as directed by your doctor can be effective.



Can Growing Pains be prevented?

No. There is no guaranteed method to prevent your child from developing growing pains.

Does Your Child Have Growing Pains?

Red Flags

Not all leg pain in children is growing pains. Sometimes there is an underlying cause that can be treated. Signs and symptoms that your child's leg pain may be due to an underlying condition and not growing pains include:

- Persistent pain night after night that lasts for hours and is not relieved with the measures noted above.
- Pain that interferes with your child's daily activities.
- Pain located in the joints.
- Pain associated with an injury.
- Pain associated with redness, swelling or rashes.
- Pain accompanied by constitutional symptoms such as fever, chills, weight loss, decreased appetite, weakness or fatigue.

Your doctor will ask you questions and examine your child to see if there are any red flags present. If so he may order additional tests including blood work, x-rays or other imaging studies.

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