

Fact Sheet

Bowlegs and knock-knees



What are bowlegs and what is the cause?

Some bowing of the legs is common in newborns and infants up to two years of age. This bowing is due to the folded position of the legs while the baby is still in the womb, when the bones are soft and flexible. The bend in the legs often causes the child to also walk pigeon-toed (with feet pointing inwards). This is a normal developmental pattern for children. In a few children bowing can be caused by illnesses that need to be treated. The doctor can identify these with an examination of your child. X-rays aren't always needed.

What treatment will be needed?

When your child begins to walk the bowing usually corrects itself. Braces or special shoes do not help straighten the bones any faster or better than the bones would on their own. For most children the bowing corrects itself with normal growth and development. If you are concerned about whether or not the bowing is getting better, then you can take photographs of your child's legs every six months to keep a record of the change. If the bowing is getting worse as the child gets older or is worse on one side then your doctor should see your child.

What are knock-knees?

Your child's bowlegs usually straighten between 18 and 20 months of age. They may then become knock-kneed. This is a normal process and most adults all have some degree of knock-knee. You will notice this between three and four years of age. By seven years of age the knee usually straightens itself, although some knees are not completely corrected until adolescence.

What treatment will be needed?

Just like bowlegs, treatment is hardly ever needed as normal growth will correct the knock-knees. Splints are not recommended. In very rare cases if the correction doesn't happen on its own then treatment may be needed in adolescence for severe knock-knees. Again, if the knock-knees seem to be getting worse on photographs taken every six months or one leg is much worse than the other leg, then see your doctor.

Remember

- Bowing is common in children under two.
- Knock-knees are common at age three to four.
- See your GP if one leg is worse than the other.

This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional
to make sure this information is right for your child.

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