

■ Growing Pains ■

“Growing pains” are a common experience for preschool and school-aged children. They are episodes of pain in your child’s legs. No one knows for sure what causes growing pains; they may just be muscle spasms that occur after an active day’s playing. Although they can be quite painful, brief episodes of growing pains in the legs are normal and harmless.

What are growing pains?

Growing pains are episodes of pain in your child’s legs. They are most common in preschool and preteen children. Although the pain is real, the cause of growing pains in children is unknown. One explanation is that the pains may result from muscle contractions or spasms, usually at the end of a day of active playing.

What do they look like?

- Pains often occur at night or when your child is resting.
- Pain usually occurs in the lower legs.
- Pain does *not* occur in the joints (hips or ankles).
- Rubbing the legs lessens the pain.

What are some possible complications of growing pains?

None. Unless there is another explanation for your child’s leg pain, the pains will go away completely with no harmful effects.

What puts your child at risk of growing pains?

Growing pains are a very common, even normal, experience for children.

Can growing pains be prevented?

Since the cause is unknown, there is no clear way to prevent growing pains. Stretching the muscles before exercise or activity may be helpful.

How are growing pains treated?

- Rubbing your child’s legs may make the pain lessen.
- Pain medications (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may be helpful.

When should I call your office?

Occasional episodes of growing pains are harmless and can be safely treated at home.

Call our office if:

- Your child has leg pain after an accident or injury.
- Your child has pain in the leg joints, not just the muscles.
- Your child has severe leg pain or tenderness.