



# Growing Pains (Benign Nocturnal Limb Pains of Childhood)

"Growing pains" is the name for a common pain syndrome that occurs in children. A French physician coined the term "growing pains" in the 1800s. Despite the name, this type of pain does not tend to occur during a rapid growth phase. In fact, physicians do not understand exactly why growing pains occur. We do know that growing pains are not a result of a disease or other condition. While growing pains cause discomfort, they do not lead to any injury or damage to the bones or joints.

Growing pains occur in about one in four children. Growing pains are slightly more common in girls. Growing pains typically occur between the ages of 2-12 years.

## Symptoms

- Most children have pain in the legs but some children have arm pain as well. Thighs, calves, ankles and knees are common locations.
- Children sometimes describe pain as sharp or cramping.
- Growing pains tend to occur in the late afternoon, evening and/or nighttime.
- Sometimes, growing pains can wake children up from sleep.
- Growing pains are more likely to occur after a day of increased physical activity.
- Growing pains may last for months or years. However, many children have periods of days to months where they are pain-free.

No rest is needed for children experiencing growing pains. Children can continue to participate in their normal activities. It is important to know that growing pains may occur the night following increased physical activities such a full day of walking or a sports tournament.

## Treatment

- Massage. Simply massage the area until the pain passes.
- Heating pads can be applied to painful areas. Make sure that heating pads not too hot.
- Analgesics such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen can be used. Please refer to the packaging or ask the child's physician for appropriate dosing (based on weight). These medications may be given before bed when pains are anticipated or when pain occurs.

## When to Seek Further Treatment

Certain symptoms are not seen in growing pains and patients experiencing these symptoms may require further evaluation by a physician. These symptoms include:

- Fevers
- Joint swelling
- Pain associated with an injury
- Rash
- Redness



- Difficulty walking
- Changes in appetite or activity level
- Limp
- Weakness