

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

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## Chiropractic Care for “Growing Pains”

*Your doctor at Spinal and Sports Care Clinic is often asked if the term “growing pains” is fact or fiction.*

*Researchers agree that the periodic aches and pains children feel in their legs are real. The term “growing pains,” however, is actually a diagnosis of exclusion; in other words, it’s often used when no other reason for the pain can be established.*

Leg pain can be caused by a number of conditions, ranging from misaligned spinal bones (vertebrae) to muscle aches associated with overuse or growth spurts. That’s why your doctor at Spinal and Sports Care Clinic urges parents to avoid making assumptions when it comes to health issues, such as growing pains.

In addition to promoting regular wellness visits, your doctor at Spinal and Sports Care Clinic encourages parents to make an appointment for their child at the first sign of leg pain.

### The Spinal Connection

Leg pain can be an indicator that the sciatic nerve is either inflamed or compressed. Although symptoms are generally felt in the leg, the spine is usually the source of sciatic pain.

The nerve root compression associated with sciatica is frequently due to **vertebral subluxation** (where spinal bones are slightly out of place) or **sacroiliac subluxation** (where the bones of the pelvis are slightly out of place). These misalignments restrict spinal movement — in turn irritating muscles, discs and nerve roots.

Your doctor at Spinal and Sports Care Clinic corrects vertebral and sacroiliac subluxations with safe and effective maneuvers known as **chiropractic adjustments**. These maneuvers, also referred to as chiropractic or spinal

manipulations, realign vertebrae and sacroiliac bones.

### Research Shows Chiropractic Alleviates Growing Pains

Research shows that chiropractic care is extremely helpful for youngsters with growing pains.

For instance, a recent case series and literature review was conducted by researchers at the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association in Media, Penn. The investigators followed a 2¼-yr-old female and 3½-yr-old male complaining of growing pains.

According to the report, “the girl’s problem began three months prior to care with awakening due to leg pain at 1-2 nights weekly in the first month and progressed to 5-6 nights per week in the month prior to presentation. The boy’s growing pain was of ‘several months’ duration that awakened the patient 2-3 nights per week.” (*Complement Ther Clin Pract* 2011;17:28-32.)

The parents of both children reported that the children had not endured any trauma — or suffer from any disease — that may be associated with growing pains.

The patients underwent a chiropractic evaluation. Both youngsters showed signs of vertebral subluxation in the spines of their low backs and hips.



The children received chiropractic adjustments during three visits over a 3-week period followed by four visits over a 14-week period. Their symptoms resolved (*Complement Ther Clin Pract* 2011;17:28-32).

### Common Causes

Following is an overview of the common causes of childhood leg pain. Fortunately, chiropractic care has been shown to alleviate all of these conditions.

### Overuse

Experts agree that the cause of growing pains may simply be an abundance of energy! After a day filled with running, jumping and non-stop movement, little muscles are bound to protest. And little spinal bones are bound to become misaligned, resulting in vertebral subluxations. That’s why children *and* adults need regular chiropractic checkups.

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## **“Flat Feet”**

Research suggests that growing pains may also be linked to pronated foot posture, commonly known as “flat feet.”

The lack of arch creates added strain on the ankles and calf muscles. Researchers in Australia found that simply creating an artificial arch with shoe inserts decreased the incidence of leg pain “and, in many cases, eliminates the episodes of aching legs.” (*J Am Podiatr Med Assoc* 2003;93:111-17.)

Pronated feet cause a chain reaction, leading to misalignment of the legs, sacroiliac subluxations and vertebral subluxations — all of which simply compound the problem.

## **Fibromyalgia**

Experts explain that “after growing pains, fibromyalgia is the most common of the generalized, recurrent limb pain syndromes without a clear organic cause.” (*Patient Care* 1998;32:63.)

This baffling disease is characterized by widespread myofascial aching, multiple points of tenderness, stiffness, fatigue and inability to achieve restorative sleep. Fortunately, chiropractic care appears to alleviate this condition.

## **When It’s Something More**

Leg pain can, on occasion, signal the presence of a more serious condition. The following are just a few of those possibilities:

### **Juvenile Arthritis**

Continual leg pain — not just at night — can be a sign of juvenile arthritis (JA). This diagnosis refers to chronic arthritic conditions that affect children under the age of 16. Symptoms last for a minimum of three to six months. The pain is not necessarily constant, tending to ebb and flow.

In addition to redness and warmth,

symptoms of JA may include stiffness, pain and swelling.

### **Lyme Arthritis**

Lyme Disease, an infection transmitted by ticks through their bacteria-laden bites, can cause serious nerve or heart problems. It can also develop into a disabling type of arthritis known as Lyme Arthritis.

Lyme Arthritis, marked by joint swelling out of proportion to the degree of pain, primarily affects the knees and often occurs in “attacks.” Between these episodes, there may be periods — lasting several months or longer — during which patients exhibit no symptoms.

If you or your child have had, or suspect you have had, Lyme Disease in the past, don’t take leg pain lightly; contact your chiropractor and schedule an appointment *today*.

### **Legg-Calve-Perthes’ Disease**

This childhood disease is marked by inflammation of the cartilage in the upper femur and the hip joint. Tissue death due to inadequate blood supply to the area appears to cause the disease.

### **Spinal Stenosis**

Spinal stenosis, marked by a narrowing of the spinal canal, puts pressure on the spinal nerves, which results in leg pain. This condition usually results from osteoarthritis, which is not common in children unless they have sustained an injury or repetitive strain.

### **Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome & Marfan Syndrome**

Another source of chronic limb pain is mechanical stress related to joint hypermobility. This may be associated with an inherited connective tissue disorder such as Ehlers-Danlos syndrome or Marfan syndrome.

## **When Do Growing Pains Occur?**

Growing pains may attack at any time

during childhood. However, they generally occur at two times in a child’s life: between the ages of three and five and again between the ages of eight and 12. The onset of pain generally begins in the late afternoon and intensifies at night — making sleep nearly impossible. The pain can even wake a child up from a sound sleep.

## **Avoid Painkiller Medications**

If your youngster complains of leg pain, don’t simply cover up discomfort by dosing your child with over-the-counter painkillers. These medications may do more harm than good.

Rather than turning to the medicine cabinet, teach your children to focus on prevention by seeking chiropractic care, which targets the underlying source of discomfort rather than masking the problem with potentially hazardous drugs.

## **Be Supportive**

It’s important to validate your child’s pain and not dismiss it. While up to 20 percent may be psychologically based, over 80 percent is physical in origin. That’s why it’s imperative that parents schedule regular chiropractic checkups for their children.

## **Don’t Gamble With Your Child’s Health: Schedule a Chiropractic Appointment Today.**

In most cases, leg pain is simply the body’s way of saying “I’ve had enough ... I need a rest!” That doesn’t mean that pain should be ignored, however. Don’t risk your child’s health — make an appointment with your doctor of chiropractic for a full examination.

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