

Bow legs & knock knees in children

Bow legs and knock knees are common in children. They can become more obvious as a toddler begins to walk. Bow legs and knock knees usually self-resolve with growth

Bow legs (genu varum) and knock knees (genu valgum)

- When a child stands with their feet flat and their ankles together the knees remain wide apart (bow legs) Fig. 1
- When a child stands their knees are together and the feet and ankles remain apart (knock knees) Fig. 2.
- Leg position changes are a normal part of development as children grow.
- Bow legs and knock knees are common in toddlers and can become more obvious as a toddler begins to walk.
- Bow legs usually correct themselves with growth by three years of age. This may be followed by a time of knock knees
- Knock knees gradually straighten with growth and almost always correct themselves by the age of 10 years.



Fig. 1 Bow legs the feet and ankles are together and the knees remain apart

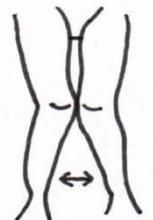


Fig. 2 Knock knees, the knees are together and the feet and ankles remain apart

Treatments

If you are concerned about your child's legs you may wish to take a photo every six months to show your doctor to see if there is an increase or decrease in the severity.

No treatment is required unless the condition is severe and there is an underlying cause which needs to be treated.

Special shoes, bracing and splints are not recommended as bow legs and knock knees usually correct themselves during growth. Surgery is rarely required and only when the child is of upper primary school age.

Summary

Bow legs and knock knees are normal in children as they grow.

Visit your child's doctor for a specialist referral if:

- Your child has a limp or pain in their legs
- Only one leg is affected
- Your child's bow legs/knock knees are severe or rapidly getting worse
- Bow legs worsen after three years of age
- Knock knees persist after 10 years of age
- The child is unusually short for their age.

For more information

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