



PODIATRY

Foot & Practice

A foot health message from
Bayswater Allied Health

Podiatric problems associated with growth spurts in teens



Teens may experience three types of growing pains. One type is the same as for younger children and affects the front of the thigh and calf muscle. Patients will have no joint pain and will otherwise seem perfectly healthy. If a patient has pain at the back of the knee, they may suffer from Osgood-Schlatter disease, caused by inflammation of the tibial tubercle at the insertion point of the patella. Teens may also suffer from Sever's disease, affecting the heel joint. Sever's disease is caused by inflammation of the calcaneal apophysis. It is thought that inflammation occurs as a result of strain from the Achilles tendon, which inserts into the calcaneal apophysis, and may be shortened in comparison to the growing bones of the lower leg.

Clinicians should check for all other signs of injury or infection before coming to a diagnosis of growing pains, as pain could be an indication of a more serious condition such as rheumatoid arthritis, stress fractures or leukaemia. If all other conditions involving joint problems or infection have been excluded, the symptoms of growing pains include; muscular discomfort in the heel, calf, knee or thigh; pain in both legs; pain occurring after long bouts of physical activity or at the end of the day; intermittent pain.

Growing pains will resolve in time. Once the bones of the feet and legs are fully developed all symptoms of growing pains will fade. Massage and specific strengthening exercises can help to relieve symptoms, and in patients with Osgood-Schlatter disease and Sever's disease, rest is the best cure in between bouts of discomfort caused by these conditions. Discomfort can be lessened by the fitting of custom orthotics and insoles with additional shock absorption to help support the heel and to provide stability for the tendons of the calf and thigh.



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