

# Growing Pains

## Definition

- Growing pains are harmless pains that occur in the leg muscles
- They are common and occur in 10 to 20% of children
- They often start between ages 4 and 6

## Health Information

### Symptoms

- Mild to moderate pains that occur in the thigh or calf muscles. The pain is not in the joints.
- The pain usually occurs on both sides.
- The pain usually lasts 10 to 30 minutes.
- Usually only occur once per day, often in the evening.

### Diagnosis

- Diagnosis is made based upon the typical pain pattern and a normal physical exam. There is no joint swelling, limping or fever. There is also normal movement of the leg joints.
- Lab tests and X-ray studies are not helpful.

### Cause

- Growing pains tend to occur late in the day. They are probably due to running and playing hard. They don't follow any known injury. Some of them are muscle cramps.
- There is no research that suggests they are caused by growth. They don't occur during a period of rapid growth.
- But, they have been called growing pains for over 100 years. No better term has come along to replace it.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Growing pains are common and occur in normal children.
- Usually, the muscle pains don't last more than 30 minutes.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Massage:

- Massage of the sore muscles can help the pain go away.
- It also increases blood flow to the muscle.

### 3. Pain Medicine:

- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen if the pain lasts more than 30 minutes.
- Usually, pain medicines are not needed because the pain goes away quickly.

### 4. Activity:

- Your child does not need to limit his sports or play. It is not helpful to restrict activity.

**5. Prevention of Recurrent Growing Pains:**

- Research has shown that daily stretching exercises can prevent most growing pains.
- Have someone teach you how to stretch the quads, hamstrings, and calf muscles.
- Stretch each muscle several times every day. The best time often is before the time that the growing pains usually occur.
- Also, be sure your child gets enough calcium in the diet. Daily Vitamin D3 may also help.

**6. What to Expect:**

- Each bout of pain lasts 10-30 minutes.
- Growing pains come and go for several years.
- They are rarely seen after 10 years of age.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Pain moves to the joints (hip, knee or ankle)
- Limping occurs
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### Pediatric Care Advice

**Author:** Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

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