

Orthopaedic Connection

Adolescent Hip Pain

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

In case you are wondering when all this hip stuff is going to end, this is the last week! So bear with me, it will be over this week.

Even so, I think it is valuable information to know about because these symptoms shouldn't be ignored. You really need to have the patient orthopaedically evaluated sooner than later.

Femoral Epiphysis

To understand what I am about to say, you have to know something about the femoral epiphysis or growth center. It is a band or strip of very actively growing cells just under the ball of the hip. There are many growth areas or epiphyses throughout the body. This one contributes to the growth of the hip and length of the thigh bone. The growth center is often also referred to as the growth plate. It responds to forces placed on it.

Slipped Epiphysis

This refers to a condition in which the ball or head of the thigh bone (femur) slips off the main part of the bone at the growth plate. You can visualize it by picturing a scoop of ice cream beginning to slip or fall off the cone.

Why Do They Get It?

The slipping occurs after a series of microstresses that allow the ball of the hip to gradually slip out of place in relation to the thighbone.

Boys are at greater risk than girls, as are young athletes. Obesity is a risk factor too as most kids who have a slipped epiphysis are heavier than the average in their age group.

There is a greater incidence among black children.

Key Point: *It is thought that these adolescents with slipped epiphysis have a certain hormonal disorder affecting the strength of the growth plate.*

Symptoms

Pain that gets worse with physical activity is the chief symptom. They all limp. They complain of pain in the groin area with radiation occasionally to the knee. Pain usually develops gradually. In a few children it can be sudden, preventing ability to bear weight.

Average Age

The average age for girls is 12 with a range of 10 - 14. With boys the average age is 13 with a slightly longer range of 11 - 16 years. 30% of children will eventually have it in both hips.

When To Call

Pick up the phone and call me if an adolescent child complains of hip or thigh pain, limps and has symptoms for more than 2 days. The exam is very characteristic and x-rays are always part of the evaluation.

Treatment

There is only one treatment. Youngsters I diagnose with slipped epiphysis need surgery to stabilize the hip. This stabilizes the bone to prevent further slippage until the growth plate closes. I place a large threaded screw in the bone. The patient can go home the next day and must use crutches and protect weight bearing for at least 6 weeks until the hip heals.

Early diagnosis is the key as in all children's Orthopaedic problems.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

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All past articles are listed by title and the complete text is available at the click of a mouse.

All of the information available concerns what I treat daily in the office and hospital. Log on and check it out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush