

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

Slipped Epiphysis of the Hip

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I am really jumping around with our topics! From Lyme disease last week to the most common serious hip problem of young teenagers. That is a big change in direction.

I hope everyone will pay close attention to this. This hip problem in youngsters is devastating if not diagnosed and treated early.

What is "Epiphysis"?

In this case it refers to the growth plate or area of growing cells at the top of the thigh bone (femur). It is just below the ball part of the hip. This plate controls how the top part of the thighbone grows.

What slips?

The plate and ball part of the hip begin to slowly "slip" or move from their usual position on top of the thighbone.

Who gets this?

- Children age 10 - 18
- African-American boys particularly
- Children with excess weight
- Very athletic children
- 30% of children with a slip also get it on the other side

Cause

After all these years we still are not sure what happens to the growth plate to cause it to slip. It remains a mystery. There are several theories.

Symptoms

- Pain in the child's thigh or knee

- They rarely complain of hip pain
- Limping
- Foot turns outward when walking
- Symptoms can build up slowly over time or can come on suddenly
- Affected leg may seem shorter

If not treated early

- Deformed hip
- Very high chance of arthritis at early age
- Stiffness in hip
- Can't run
- Shorter leg

Warning

Any child complaining of pain in the thigh, knee or hip can indicate this serious condition. Don't delay. They must be seen. Call me. Call somebody. Please. It's not a "sprain or pulled muscle".

Treatment

- Earliest possible treatment is the key
- Surgery to place metal pins in the bone to stop the "slip"
- The pins allow the growth plate to fuse and become stable
- The pain stops
- I keep my patients on crutches for at least a few weeks

I realize that some kids have more complaints than others. Better to have it checked early than to risk a lifetime of pain, limping and possible arthritis. **If you miss it as a parent, you will never forgive yourself.**

Log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com and Your Orthopaedic Connection for lots more information about hip problems and everything I see at LCWC Orthopaedic Clinic and the office in Alma, 315 Warwick Dr. Call 989-463-6092 for an appointment at either place.

Future Clinic dates are May 21 and June 4, 2010.

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