

Bow legs and knock knees in children

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1. Bow legs (genu varum)

Bow legs are common in infants and young children and can become more obvious as a toddler begins to walk. When a child stands with their feet flat and their ankles together the knees remain wide apart (Fig1).

Bow legs usually correct themselves with growth by 3 years of age. This may be followed by a time of knock knees.

2. Knock Knees (genu valgum)

Leg position changes are a normal part of development as children grow. Knock knees are common in children between three and seven years of age. When the child is standing the knees are together and the feet and ankles remain apart (Fig 2).

Knock knees gradually straighten with growth and almost always correct themselves by the age of ten years.

Treatment

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. Rarely is surgery required and only when the child is in upper primary school age



Figure 1. In bow legs, when the feet and ankles are together, the knees remain apart

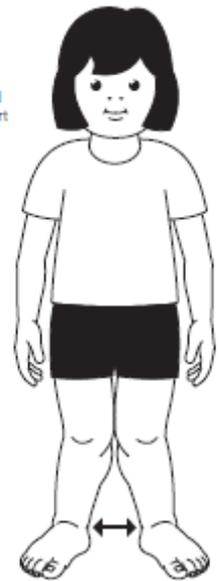


Figure 2. In knock knees, when the knees are together, the feet and ankles remain apart

Summary

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

Visit your child's doctor to get 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 3 years of age
- Knock knees persist after 10 years of age