ARTHRITIS
INFORMATION SHEET

Growing pains
(Benign nocturnal limb pains (BNLP))

What are growing pains?
'Growing pains' is a name used to describe a pattern of pain in one or both legs, which occurs in young children often later in the evenings. Growing pains are also known as Benign nocturnal limb pains (BNLP) especially when they occur in the evening or at night time.

What causes growing pains?
The cause is not known, but may be related to times of rapid growth or vigorous physical activity. These are usually due to an imbalance between bone length and muscle strength, which occurs during growth, and settles as growth evens out. Therefore, there will be periods where the pains are more, or less, of a problem. Pain can be worse in the evenings after physically active days (e.g. after sports training or a party). The pain can sometimes wake the child from sleep.

The most accepted theory is that the pain originates from the muscles in the legs.

It is common for other family members to have had similar pains in childhood.

What are the symptoms of growing pains?
Growing pains are common and affect otherwise healthy children. The pains usually start in the preschool years. Growing pains are often difficult to pinpoint, but are usually in the legs. Swelling, tenderness, redness or limping are NOT features of growing pains. If these are occurring, your child should see a doctor.

Growing pains are usually short-lived (approximately half an hour), but can be very distressing.

How are growing pains diagnosed?
If your child is thriving, is well and is free of pain during the day, generally no investigations are necessary for your doctor to diagnose growing pains. It is worth seeing your doctor who can assess your child, rule out any other causes of pain and confirm they have growing pains.

How are growing pains treated?
There is no specific treatment for growing pains. They do not cause permanent damage to the muscles, bones or joints and will go away completely over time.

How can I help my child with growing pains?
Heat packs, warm baths, massage and paracetamol or ibuprofen (e.g. Nurofen) are used by some parents and may provide some comfort. The benefits of these home treatments are not well proven for growing pains and the pain will go away even if nothing is done.

For your local Arthritis Office:
1800 011 041 www.arthritisaustralia.com.au

Arthritis AUSTRALIA
Australian Rheumatology Association

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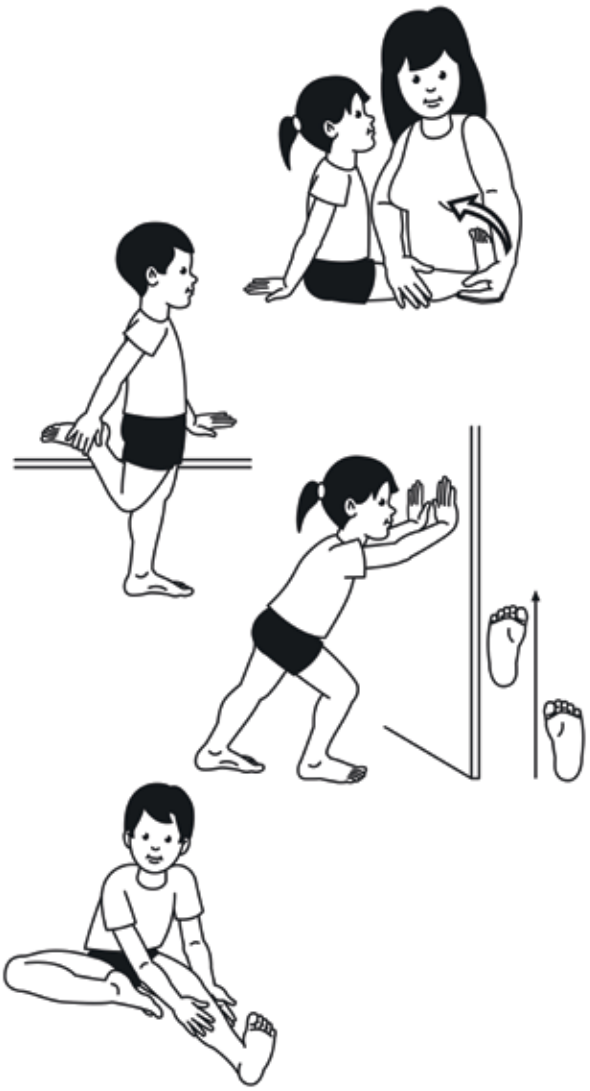
Living with growing pains
Usually the pains disappear within a couple of years, but can affect some children for longer.

What is the outlook for my child?
Growing pains invariably get better on their own over time.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ARTHRITIS OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION SHEETS ON ARTHRITIS.

Exercises that may help



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This sheet was produced in association with the Australian Paediatric Rheumatology Group

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