



# Diagnosis of Hip Dysplasia

Hip dysplasia is usually diagnosed by a doctor who is experienced in treating hip conditions. The diagnosis is based on your symptoms, a physical exam, and imaging tests like X-rays. Some adolescents with hip dysplasia might see several doctors before getting the correct diagnosis, but this is improving as awareness of the condition grows. If your hip pain continues and you're not sure about your diagnosis, getting a second opinion might be helpful.

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## Common Symptoms of Hip Dysplasia

The first signs of hip dysplasia in adolescents are often hip pain or a limp. Sometimes, you might limp without feeling pain because limping helps your body reduce discomfort. However, these symptoms can also be caused by other hip problems, so it's important to see a doctor for a proper diagnosis.

If you have two or more of these symptoms, it's more likely that your pain is due to hip dysplasia:

- **Pain in the front of the groin:** This is the most common symptom, affecting four out of five people with hip dysplasia. The pain may come from a labral tear (damage to the soft rim of cartilage in the hip joint), joint cartilage damage, or strained hip muscles.
- **Aching muscles on the side or front of the hip:** These muscles work harder when the hip socket is shallow and can become sore.
- **Pain during activity:** Walking, standing, or running usually makes the pain worse.
- **Pain at night:** About half of people with hip dysplasia experience pain while resting.



- **Catching, snapping, or popping:** These sensations are often painful and are reported by most people with hip dysplasia.
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## Other Signs of Hip Dysplasia

- **Pain in the thigh or buttocks:** This is less common unless it happens along with groin or hip pain.
  - **Pain that gets worse over time:** The pain might be mild at first but tends to increase as the condition progresses.
  - **Different types of pain:** Sometimes the pain is sharp, other times it might be a dull ache, or a mix of both.
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## Limping

Limping is common in adolescents with hip dysplasia. It can be caused by pain or by other factors like weak muscles, stiff joints, or bone abnormalities. A painless limp might still happen because the body is trying to relieve pressure on the hip joint. However, a limp doesn't always mean hip dysplasia—it can be caused by other hip conditions as well.

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## Physical Examination for Hip Dysplasia

When you visit the doctor, they'll begin by watching how you stand and walk. They'll look for things like:

- **Pelvic tilt:** If one side of your pelvis is higher than the other.
- **Leg length differences:** Sometimes one leg might appear shorter than the other.



- **Muscle weakness:** The doctor will check if any muscles have weakened because of your hip condition.

Next, they will move your hip through a range of motion to check for pain or tightness, especially when your leg moves outward. During walking, many people with hip dysplasia have a noticeable limp. This can happen because one side of the pelvis drops when standing on the affected hip (called the Trendelenburg test).

## The Impingement Test

Your doctor may perform a test called the impingement test to see if you have hip dysplasia. This test involves bending your hip and rotating it inward to check for pinching or pain. A torn labrum or irritation at the edge of the socket might cause discomfort during this test.

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## X-Ray Diagnosis

X-rays are a common and reliable way to diagnose hip dysplasia. An X-ray can show if the hip socket (acetabulum) is too shallow to hold the ball of the thigh bone (femoral head) properly. The X-ray will also help your doctor see how severe the dysplasia is and whether surgery might be necessary.

### Key Things X-rays Show:

- **Shallow Hip Sockets:** If the hip socket doesn't cover enough of the femoral head, it's a sign of dysplasia.
- **Center-Edge Angle (C-E angle):** This angle measures how deep the hip socket is. A normal C-E angle is 25 degrees or more. A smaller angle means the hip socket is too shallow.
- **Hip Displacement:** If the hip joint is displaced upwards, it means the hip joint is wearing out faster, which can lead to further problems.



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## MRI for Hip Dysplasia

In some cases, your doctor might also recommend an MRI scan. An MRI can give a clearer picture of any damage to the cartilage or labrum in your hip joint. This information is important when planning treatment, especially if surgery is being considered.

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## Conclusion: What to Expect

If you or your doctor suspects hip dysplasia, a combination of symptoms, physical exams, and imaging tests like X-rays or MRIs can confirm the diagnosis. Don't hesitate to seek a second opinion if you've been dealing with hip pain for a while and haven't found relief. Understanding the cause of your pain is the first step toward finding the right treatment and getting back to the activities you enjoy.

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## Contact Us for More Information:

If you have more questions about hip dysplasia or would like to explore treatment options, reach out to us at [HipPreservation.org](http://HipPreservation.org). We're here to help you get the answers you need.