

Joint hypermobility in children

Your child has joint hypermobility if their joints are more flexible than usual for their age. This can also be called being 'double-jointed'.

In joint hypermobility the tissue that connects the joint is more stretchy than usual.

It's not an illness or disease. Most children with hypermobile joints do not need support with everyday activities.

Who gets hypermobility

Joint hypermobility is very common in children. It affects more girls than boys. It usually runs in families.

Many children do not realise that they are hypermobile. Sometimes it can be advantageous to be hypermobile in activities such as dance, gymnastics and swimming.

Symptoms

Your child might not have any symptoms.

However, some children experience:

- joint and muscle pains, especially in the leg muscles - symptoms usually improve with rest
- low muscle tone and weakness in the muscles - may affect fine and gross motor skills
- flat feet, which makes sprains of affected joints more likely
- growing 'cramping' or 'deep aching' pains, usually in the legs at night time - these respond well to gentle massage and heat

Hypermobility in babies and toddlers

Babies with hypermobility:

- sometimes appear floppy or weak
- might be late learning how to sit, sit with a very rounded back or "W" sit
- might bum shuffle and never crawl
- might hate [tummy time](#)

Hypermobile infants often start walking a few months later than usual. This can be as late as 18 to 20 months. Choose supportive footwear once they're up on their feet and walking.

[Get advice on choosing the right shoes for your child](#)

Talk to your public health nurse or physiotherapist if you think your baby or toddler is hypermobile and not reaching [developmental milestones](#).

When to get help

Your GP, an occupational therapist or physiotherapist can help you if your child is:

- experiencing frequent or severe pain
- having problems with activities of daily living such as handwriting
- not reaching their gross motor milestones such as walking or jumping

Help your child manage their hypermobility

Keeping active and strong is important and helps reduce joint pain. Joints are more stable when they are supported by strong muscles.

Encourage your child to be as active as possible. Focus on fun activities such as swimming, cycling and going to the playground. These will not 'over-stress' hypermobile joints.

Spread out exercise. Do a little bit of exercise often and do it every day. This will minimise muscle ache and pain after exercising.

Use the following activities to help your child build strength, stability and coordination:

- animal walks, pretending to be different animals such as crab, bear and snake
- bear walk on hands and feet and walking forwards, keeping a slight bend at the elbows and knees
- pretend to be a snake, lying on your tummy and using hands and legs to move your body forward

Give children with hypermobility thicker pencils and crayons. These relieve pressure on their joints and prevent pain.

[Find out what to look out for when choosing your child's school bag](#)

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