

# Orthopaedic Connection

## Painful Hip: Ages 4 - 8

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

### ***Transforming patient information into patient understanding.***

Hip problems in children are very age related as you will begin to appreciate. Last week when we talked about transient synovitis we said it happened in children up to about age 5. That's the upper age limit, but synovitis usually would be in children age 2 or 3.

From age 4 - 8 another condition takes over affecting children's hips.

Name: Legg-Calve-Perthes Disease.

Ouch! I told you before lots of Orthopaedic things are named after people who described the condition. Just call it Perthes for short.

### **What Is It?**

A hip condition in which the blood supply to the ball is in some way interrupted. Why - no one knows. The bone becomes brittle and may collapse a little like dimples on a golf ball. The normal hip ball is totally smooth. These changes in the hip can eventually can lead to arthritis at a fairly young age.

- The condition appears in children between ages 4 and 8
- One hip is affected 90% of time
- It is four times more common in boys
- It is rare in black children

### **Symptoms**

- Pain in the hip or thigh
- Often pain starts in the knee and moves up to the groin area.
- Limping, worse with more activity
- **Key Point: Don't consider hip pain growing pains! Bad mistake.**

### **When To Call**

Children with Perthes will not look sick. They don't run a fever. They aren't listless.

It is not that unusual for children to complain of knee or hip pain. Most kids this age are very active. Clumsy. They fall.

Even if there seems to be a cause like a fall, pain in the hip should go away in two days. Three at the most. Beyond that you need to call. Do it for the kid.

**Treatment**

Children's bones have an amazing ability to repair themselves; much greater than adults.

It is possible for the bone in the ball part (head of the femur) to begin healing itself.

Physical therapy sometimes helps to maintain good range of motion. A night brace may be used to keep the ball in the best position in the hip socket to mold it into its normal round shape.

Surgery is sometimes needed to treat the ball and socket. Surgery is much more likely in children over six years of age.

In general the younger the child is at onset, the better the healing and the eventual outcome.

**Prevention**

Unfortunately there is no known prevention for Perthes.

**Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website**

[www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com) is a great source of musculoskeletal information that you can use. In addition, it is your entry to the Gratiot County Herald Archive of all articles I have written for GCH Orthopaedic Connection. They are all listed, most recent all the way back to first. A couple of mouse clicks and the whole article appears!

The articles and website cover everything I treat in the office and hospital. Check it out.

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