

# Argus Orthopaedic Zone

## Bow Legs

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

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

The legs of toddlers can look terrible to their parents and others in the family. Typically the small child comes to the office accompanied by his or her Mom and Grandmother. Often it is the Grandmother who is sure that the “legs are not right”. The Moms are not sure, but Grandma seems to rule.

The “deformity” comes in two versions. The knees can bow out awkwardly. Sometimes it is the reverse and the knees bump together, a condition often called knock-knees.

### **It Is Common**

The conditions are common and I see them a lot. Bow legs occur from the start of walking up to about age 2. It can be dramatic and I can see why Grandma and Mom are concerned. Especially if it’s the first child and also if Mom was that way at age 1 – 2 according to her mother.

### **Knock-Knee**

The knock-knee look is very common in 3 – 6 year olds. I don’t find this to be as dramatic as bow legs. Perhaps it’s because the child is a little older and has been walking for awhile.

### **Treatment**

At this point in time the treatment for bow legs and knock-knee is watchful waiting or let nature take its course.

The corrective shoes, braces, and bars that were used in the past are rarely used anymore.

The appearance of the legs looked so bad that I think doctors at the time felt they had to “do something”.

Gradually over years Pediatricians and Orthopaedic Surgeons began to use less and less corrective shoes and braces and guess what? The untreated ones turned out about the same as the treated group. Hmm.....

Nowadays it is *somewhat* easier to convince Grandma that watchful waiting is OK.

### **Rare Cases**

I am always happy to see any child the family is concerned about and for sure if there are other symptoms such as pain or “won’t walk” you must not delay having it checked. Bad signs are fever, limping, symptoms in one leg, etc.

You can’t go wrong having something checked you are worried about.

Hopefully this short article has given some information that you or someone you know can use.

### **Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive**

I sincerely appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Besides what you read today there is a huge treasure trove of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information at [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It contains the Website Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and complete archive of every Argus article I have written.

I specialize in you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush