

# FACTSHEET

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## Bowlegs and knock-knees

### What are bowlegs and what is the cause?

Bowing of the legs (genu varum) is when the feet are together and the knees remain apart.

Bowing is common in newborns and toddlers as they start walking. The bowing is caused by the position of the baby's legs in the womb. The bowing may also give your child a pigeon-toed appearance (with feet pointing inwards). This is a typical developmental pattern for children.

### Is any treatment needed?

Bowlegs disappear for most children by 3 years of age without any treatment. Braces or special shoes will not help straighten your child's bones.

If you are concerned about your child's legs, you can take photographs of your child's legs every six months to keep a record of the changes. If the bowing is getting worse as your child grows, or is worse on one side, your child should see your doctor.

In rare cases, bowing can be caused by illnesses that need to be treated. The doctor can identify these by examining your child. X-rays are not always needed.

### What are knock-knees?

At 2-3 years of age your child may begin to become knock-kneed (genu valgum). You may notice this between 3-4 years of age. When your child's knees are together, the ankles remain apart. It should not be painful.

This is a typical developmental process for children. By 7-8 years of age the knock-knees usually straighten, although some knees are not completely straightened until adolescence, and most adults have some degree of knock-knee.

### Is any treatment needed?

Treatment is rarely needed. The knock knees will straighten as your child grows. Splints are not recommended. In very rare cases, treatment may be needed for teenagers with persistent, severe knock-knees. If the knock-knees seem to be getting worse on six monthly photographs, one leg is worse than the other, your child develops a limp, or pain, see your doctor.

### Remember:

- Bowing is common in children under two.
- Knock-knees are common at the ages three to four.
- See your GP if your child develops a limp, pain, or one leg is worse than the other.