

Hypermobility in Children: Information for parents

What is hypermobility?

Hyper means 'more' and mobility refers to movement, so hypermobility means 'more movement'.

Ligaments hold joints steady and prevent excess joint movement. In hypermobility these ligaments are more lax and therefore allow more movement at the joints.

Hypermobility may affect just one joint or many joints. It is not an illness or disease and is a normal variation.

How common is hypermobility?

Hypermobility is commonly seen in young children. Most children are flexible but some more so than others. Most children will get less flexible as they get older and should improve as the child's strength and co-ordination develop.

A small number of children will remain flexible and it is more likely if the parents are flexible as hypermobility tends to run in families.

Common concerns

Many children who are hypermobile do not experience any problems.

However, some children may:

- Take longer to achieve skills such as crawling, walking and running
- Appear clumsy and fall frequently
- Have flat feet
- Have clicky joints
- Have aching limbs, particularly after increased activity

It is believed that the problems mentioned above are as a result of poor muscle strength and stamina as the muscles are required to work harder to control joint movement. It is not caused directly by the hypermobility

What can be done to help?

It is important to focus on being healthy, strong and fit. Good muscle strength is needed to stabilise hypermobile joints and protect against injury.

Encourage normal everyday activities such as swimming, cycling, PE and dance.

Pacing

If your child gets muscle pain following activity do not stop them from being active as this is required to build muscle strength. Instead, pace the activity so that it builds gradually to a level that is manageable.

Try not to do too much activity in one day. Instead, space it out little and often throughout the week. The pain from hypermobility is often a result of muscle fatigue. A warm bath or hot water bottle may help soothe this muscle pain.

Footwear

Supportive footwear is beneficial to children who are hypermobile. Try to ensure that footwear has sturdy support around the heel and an upper that supports the whole foot. Shoes should have fastening such as laces or buckles to stop the foot moving in the shoe. Slip-on shoes should be avoided

Try to ensure the sole of the shoe is sturdy enough to act as a shock absorber. Lace-up boots are often supportive and comfortable. Other shoes can be worn for short periods or special occasions.

When to seek help

Physiotherapy is often useful after an injury to return to everyday activities. If your child is experiencing repeated injury or frequent pain then speak to your GP for advice.

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Other useful information

Hypermobility Syndromes Association
Hypermobility.org

Arthritis Research UK
www.arthritisresearchuk.org

Search for joint hypermobility on the site and you will find resources and information, including a free booklet you can download

Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists
apcp.csp.org.uk
Follow the links for 'Publications and Resources' and 'Parent Leaflets'

Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust
www.glos-care.nhs.uk
Follow links to 'Our Services' and 'Children and Young People' to find the Children's Physiotherapy page, which includes a range of factsheets

Contact Us

Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust
Edward Jenner Court
1010 Pioneer Avenue
Gloucester Business Park
Brockworth
Gloucester
GL3 4AW

Children's Physio Direct
Call: 0300 421 6980
Monday to Friday, 9am to 12pm
(excluding Bank Holidays)
For 0-16 years (or 16-19 in full-time education)

Your experience

Your views are important to us. If you need advice or have feedback on a community hospital in Gloucestershire, or on our community health or adult social care services, you can contact one of the advisers from our service experience team. All enquiries are completely confidential.

You can contact us between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

This leaflet can also be supplied in braille, audio format, PDF, large print, easy-read and other languages on request.

Telephone 0300 421 8313 (answerphone available outside office hours)

Email: yourexperience@glos-care.nhs.uk

Write to: Service Experience Team, Gloucester Care Services NHS Trust, Edward Jenner Court, 1010 Pioneer Avenue, Gloucester Business Park, Brockworth, Gloucester, GL3 4AW