

Bowlegs and Knock-knees

Bowlegs (*Genu varum*) is a condition where the legs curve outwards in the standing position. When the child stands with their feet and ankles together, the knees remain wide apart (**Figure 1**).

Knock-knees (*Genu valgum*) is a condition where the legs curve inwards in the standing position. When the child stands with their knees together, the feet and ankles remain wide apart (**Figure 2**).

Infants are born bowlegged due to their folded position in the uterus, but parents often do not notice until the child starts to stand and walk. The legs begin to straighten once the child starts to walk and normal appearance is usually attained by the time the child is three years old.

Knock-knee is a common condition in children between the ages of three and eight years old. It usually straightens itself, although some knees are not completely corrected until adolescence (**Figure 3**).

No treatment is usually required for bowlegs or knock-knees unless the condition is extreme and there is an underlying cause. Special shoes, exercise programs, splints and braces are not recommended, as these conditions usually correct and improve over time with normal growth. Most people have some degree of bowlegs or knock-knee and this is considered within the limits of normal posture.

To measure natural improvement, take photographs of your child in standing with their kneecaps pointing forward every 6 months.

However you do need to see a paediatric orthopaedic specialist if:

- the bowlegs get worse after 3 years old
- the knock-knees persist after 8 years old
- only one side is affected
- your child has pain or a limp
- your child is unusually short for his/her age.

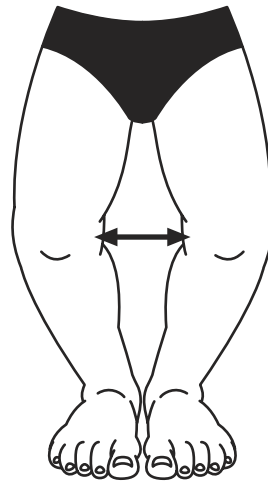


Figure 1. With bowlegs, when the feet and ankles are together, the knees remain wide apart.

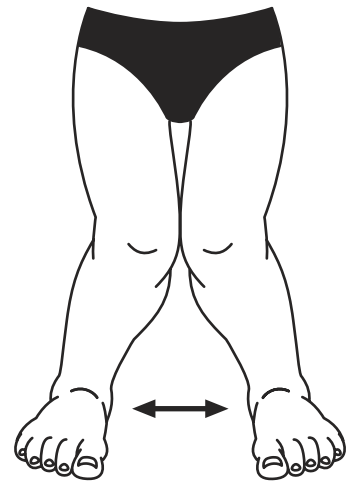


Figure 2. With knock-knees, when the knees are together, the feet and ankles remain wide apart.

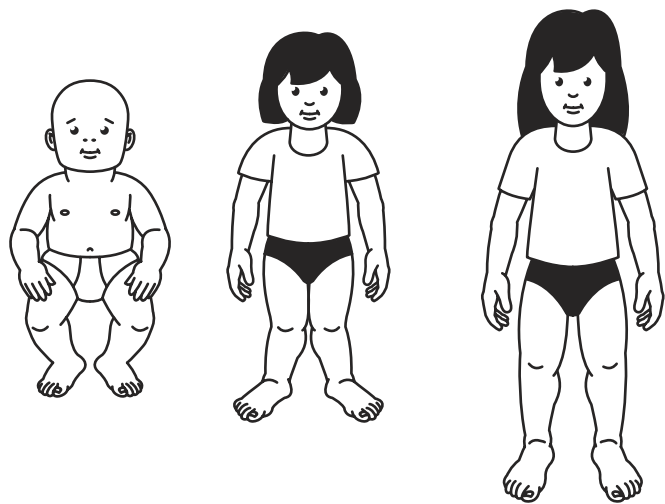


Figure 3. Normal evolution from bowlegs (1 year old) to knock-knees (4 years old) to normal (8 years old).