

# Bow Legs and Knock-Knees

## Information for Parents and Carers

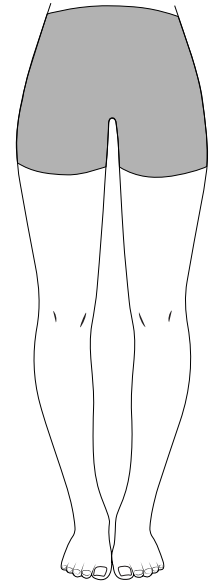
Bow-legs mean that there is a gap between the knees when the ankles are pressed together. Knock-knees are present when there is a gap between the ankle bones when the knees are pressed together.



**Knock Knees**



**Straight**



**Bow Legs**

### Are Bow-Legs or Knock-Knees Abnormal?

In most children bow-legs and knock-knees are normal, and part of growing up. There is a very famous study from Scandinavia in 1975 which demonstrated the changing shape of children's leg as they age. This study demonstrated that all children are born with bow-legs and that these are usually present until about the age of 2. After this they become knock-kneed. The degree of knock-knee is most obvious between ages of 3-4. The legs then gradually straighten reaching an adult shape by the age of 10-12. Heavy children and children with loose ligaments stretch their knee joints and their knee shape often appears worse.

Symmetrical bow-legs before the age of two, and symmetrical knock-knees seen between the ages of 2 and 12 are termed "physiological" because these appearance are part of the normal growth and development of human's legs. It should be remembered that we are all slightly different in appearance and this goes for leg shape too.

If a child has bow-legs beyond the age of 3, or knock-knees before the age of 2 or after age 10 this may be due to an underlying cause. Your doctor will refer you to our clinic in this instance. Another reason for referral is if there is a difference between the two legs or if there is pain. Pain is unusual in symmetrical bow-legs or knock-knees as this part of normal development.



## Is Treatment Necessary?

Normally, no. We hope this information is reassuring knowing that all babies are bow legged and as they approach their second birthday this becomes less pronounced (noticeable). Between the ages of 2 and 4 the knock-knees will become obvious until the age of around 4. After this it will improve over time. It is helpful to take photographs every 4 to 6 months to monitor the progress and this usually shows the legs changing as we would expect. There is no need for physiotherapy, special shoes or braces as this is the normal development of the legs. Occasionally, if there is an underlying cause this may require treatment, usually only if your child has pain or a problem with only one leg.

## Illustrations

<https://www.narayanahealth.org/blog/knee-deformities-in-children-when-to-see-the-doctor/>