

Getting a leg up on growing pains

☒ You tuck your child into bed and five minutes later he cries for you. You bolt back in to find him moaning that his legs hurt. You rub his legs, he feels better, and drifts back off to sleep. Later you can't put yourself to sleep. "What was that all about?" you wonder.

Growing pains cause recurring leg pain at night that sometimes awakens children from sleep. They usually affect boys and girls in two age groups: three to five years old and eight to twelve. We don't really know what causes growing pains. We do know that massaging the legs, one dose of pain reliever (acetaminophen or ibuprofen), and warmth can help. The kids are always fine in the morning. Often growing pains occur after a particularly active day. Fortunately, growing pains do not cause any long term problems, just temporary discomfort and some disturbed family sleep.

Before you chalk up leg pain to growing pains, you need to be sure that some other ominous source of pain is not waking your child. If you see any of these symptoms, schedule an office visit with your child's doctor:

- Leg swelling

- Leg redness

- The pain is always in the same spot on the same leg

- Your child is limping

- Your child stops participating in her usual activities because of the pain

- The pain comes on during exercise

Fever is present with the pain
Simple massage or Tylenol fails to relieve
the pain.

Your child is losing weight or seems
otherwise sick

Leg pain is accompanied by night sweats: your
child's pajamas and sheets are soaking wet

The pains seem to be getting more frequent or
worse

Pain in the daytime

Even without the above symptoms, if your parent intuition
is telling you to get your child checked, then please do.

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