Children's Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Service

Bendy Joints

Information for parents, carers and schools



Introduction



Joints help our bodies move. Muscles and ligaments help keep joints strong and steady.

Children who are hypermobile have joints that move more than usual. This can make joints weaker and less steady. It may cause:

- pain
- swelling
- tiredness

Symptoms can get worse after:

- growing quickly
- not enough exercise
- an injury or accident

Doctors may look for a reason why your child is hypermobile. The advice and therapy are usually the same whatever the reason.

Possible symptoms

Tiredness

Children may feel tired because:

- their joints and muscles work extra hard
- everyday jobs take more effort

Pain

- Joints that move too much can become sore or painful.

compassionate care

Co-ordination

- Our joints help tell our brain where our body is. When joints move too much, these messages can become unclear.

This can make some activities harder, such as:

- handwriting
- using cutlery
- getting dressed

As children grow and become more active:

- joints often get stronger
- pain may get better
- co-ordination may improve
- children may feel less tired

Helping Your Child

Good Sitting and Standing

Good posture can help protect joints and save energy.

Sitting

- When sitting at a desk feet should be flat on the floor, with arms resting comfortably and the desk just below elbow height.
- When using a keyboard for a longer period, it may help using a chair with arm rests.
- A sloped writing board may help neck position.
- When standing to carry out work, the work surface should be at a height comfortable to a child.

Carrying Things

- Carry heavy objects close to the body.
- Use a backpack with padded straps on both shoulders.
- Put heavy items near the back of the bag.
- Carry objects with open hands where possible.

Use the strongest joint available for the job:

- Teach your child to bend their knees when picking things up.
- Use Bigger Joints, larger joints are stronger.
- They may be able to slide things instead of lifting them.
- When opening cupboard doors, use a loop that can be pulled with wrist or forearm to reduce stress on fingers.

Keep Joints Moving

Movement helps stop joints becoming stiff and sore.

Helpful ideas:

- Gentle exercise and moving around during the day can help, even if your child has some pain.
- Take breaks when writing.
- Stop every hour on long car journeys so your child can stretch and move around.
- Get up and move every 30 minutes during TV time.
- Try not to let your child rest their head on their hands at a desk.

Protecting Joints

Encourage gentle movement every day.

- Avoid sudden jerky movements.
- Help your child notice when a joint feels sore from overuse.
- Encourage careful use of hands and fingers.
- Use chunky pens, thicker-handled cutlery and larger grips.
- Encourage your child to hold objects in the palm of their hand instead of pinching with fingers.
- Carry smaller loads more often instead of one heavy load.
- Do not encourage “party tricks” that over-stretch joints.

Strategies to help:

Exercise

Try to avoid long periods of sitting still. Gentle exercise can make joints stronger.

Good activities include:

- swimming
- walking
- yoga

Pain Relief

These may help your child relax:

- warm baths
- heat packs
- hot water bottles
- ice packs can help swelling
- keeping busy and having fun activities can also help distract from pain.
- speak to your GP if pain is hard to manage.

Sleep

Help your child have:

- regular bedtimes
- regular wake-up times
- avoid screens before bed.

Healthy Eating

A healthy diet helps keep joints healthy. Extra weight can put more pressure on joints.

Planning Activities

Try to balance activity and rest.

Helpful ideas:

- take breaks before your child gets too tired
- mix easy and hard activities through the day
- work at a steady pace
- work out what is important for a child to prioritise.

Self-Care

If dressing or using cutlery is hard, these may help:

- Velcro fastenings
- elastic shoelaces
- built-up handles can help with grip.

Advice for Schools

- Make sure children sit with feet flat on the floor.
- If children appear to be slumping in their chair a foam wedge can help as this may cause pain.
- A writing slope may help handwriting.
- Allow movement breaks during lessons.
- Chunky pens or pencil grips may help.
- Warm up exercises before writing may help.
- Some children may need to sit on a chair instead of the floor.
- Discourage children sitting in a ‘w’ position on the floor

PE

Unless told otherwise, children should join in PE when possible.

- Exercise helps keep joints strong.
- Wear supportive trainers rather than bare feet.
- Avoid painful high-impact sports during flare-ups.

Useful websites:

OT Stores: www.otstores.co.uk
Posturite: www.posturite.co.uk
Back in Action: www.backinaction.co.uk
Peta (UK) LTD: www.peta-uk.com
Essential Aids: www.essentialaids.com
Ability Store: www.abilitystore.co.uk
HOMECRAFT: www.homecraft-rolyan.com
Greeper Laces: www.greeper.com

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Other useful support links

- Pain toolkit self-management booklet: www.paintoolkit.org
- www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk
- CHEWS (Children's Emotional and well-being services - Telephone self-referral 01924 492183
- CAMHS (NHS Child & adolescent Mental Health Services)

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

NHS at Broad Street Plaza, Telephone No: 01422 261340
Princess Royal Health Centre, Telephone No: 01484 344299

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

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