

Early diagnosis for Legg-Perthes Disease is critical.

And most parents aren't even aware of it.



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Although most people have never heard of Legg-Perthes Disease (LPD), it is a relatively common childhood hip disorder. In fact, it affects 1 out of every 1,200 children under the age of 15. LPD is a disease where an unexplained decrease in blood supply to the hip joint leads to a decrease in bone mass, where the top of the thigh bone meets the hip, weakening the hip and making it painful to walk.

The cause of LPD largely remains a mystery. There is usually no history of trauma in the cases that we see. We do know some of the risk factors: boys are four to five times more likely to have LPD, though girls typically have a worse long-term prognosis; the disease affects children between the ages of 3 – 12; Caucasians are more likely to develop LPD;

and a low birthrate seems to also pose a risk. A family history is only present in about six percent of LPD cases. Oddly enough, most cases are diagnosed during the Fall season, although we're not sure why.

The main symptom of LPD is a leg limp with groin, thigh or knee pain. Usually, children report that it's become painful to walk. Parents often think this is merely due to "growing pains." Fifteen to twenty percent of those who develop LPD in one leg will eventually develop it in the other.

I specialize in the diagnosis of LPD. When a child who may have LPD comes to my office, I typically conduct a physical exam followed by a series of x-rays. Among the signs I look for are a decreased leg range of motion, a visible loss of thigh muscle and one leg that is shorter than the other. A manual test often produces a characteristic muscle spasm.

LPD is what we call a self-limiting disease, with more than half of LCD patients not requiring treatment. The disease must simply run its course. When we do recommend treatment, the goal is to limit the chances of degenerative arthritis later in life. Treatments may include bed rest, medication, leg bracing or, less commonly, surgery. Physical therapy and rehabilitation are often recommended, as well.

Early diagnosis for LPD is critical. Children diagnosed at a younger age have a much better chance of avoiding complications when they are adults. Most people with LCD are pain free and function well in their 50's and 60's.

Get in touch with your doctor if your child is experiencing chronic pain when he or she walks. If specialized treatment is recommended, call the Maimonides Orthopaedic Center at 718-875-8181 for an appointment.

We're here to identify and treat the problem to help your child enjoy a pain-free life.



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 To find the right doctor for you, call (888) MMC-DOCS (662-3627).**