

BOW LEGS AND KNOCK KNEES

Children's legs change shape throughout their growth. Babies are born with bow legs (genu varum) and as they grow the legs gradually straighten by the time they are two or three years old and then the child develops knock knees (genu valgum). Over the next few years the legs gradually straighten again out by the time they are eight years old and most, although not all, adults have slight genu valgum (slightly knocked knee). At the same time the legs bones of the legs may twist and untwist resulting in intoeing and outtoeing. These changes are all part of normal development.

Because bow legs and knock knees usually correct naturally, special shoes, braces or exercises are not recommended. If you are concerned about the shape of your child's legs, it may be helpful to take a photograph of your child every six months to show your doctor. Photograph your child standing with their knees facing forward. Bow legs and knock knees are normal in young children as they grow.

However, visit your child's doctor if:

- *your child's bow legs or knock knees are severe*
- *bow legs persist after age three*
- *knock knees worsen after age eight*
- *only one leg is affected*
- *your child has pain or a limp*
- *your child is unusually short for their age.*

