Genu Valgum

Genu valgum is the medical term for "knock-knees." Knock knees is a condition where the knees angle in and touch each other when the legs are straight. When this is severe, you cannot touch your feet together with the legs straight. There is an inward curve of both femur and tibia. The femur is the large bone in your thigh. The tibia is the large bone in the lower leg.

Mild genu valgum is fairly common in children up to two years of age. Usually the legs gradually straighten as children grow and develop. Sometimes the condition may continue or get worse with age. This is more likely if there are other diseases such as rickets or obesity. Sometimes the cause is not known. This is called idiopathic.

Long standing injuries and arthritis of the knee generally come earlier in life. Chondromalacia or softening of the cartilage of the knee is another possible problem.

CAUSES

The main cause of knock knees is rickets and obesity. It can also be caused by bone problems, infection and tumors. Injury can also cause this.

SYMPTOMS

- Usually there is little or no effect on walking.
- Over time because of uneven stress and wear, arthritis will come on at an earlier age. This will cause pain in the knee.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnoses of genu valgum of the knee can be made by x-rays and exam.

TREATMENT

- The treatment of knock knees will depend on the cause.
- Rickets must be treated and the child must not be placed on the legs early in treatment. Generally, there is no known cure for knock knees after childhood.
- Exercise and mechanical devices to support the limbs (*orthotics*) do not help.
- Surgery is often the only treatment after childhood.

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