

# Limp in children

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## Rationale

Limp is a laboured, jerky or strenuous way of walking, usually caused by weakness, pain, or deformity. Although usually caused by benign conditions, at times it may be life or limb threatening.

## Causal Conditions

(list not exhaustive)

- Congenital (lower limb, spine)
- Acquired (lower limb, spine)
  - a. Infection
  - b. Inflammation
  - c. Tumours
    - Benign
    - Malignant
- Other
  - a. Growing pains
  - b. Pain amplification syndromes

## Key Objectives

Given a child with a limp, the candidate will identify the most likely cause, in particular ruling out the most serious possible diagnoses. Note, in particular, that the most serious diseases causing a limp or leg pain in children are usually unilateral.

## Enabling Objectives

Given a child with a limp, the candidate will

- acquire and interpret critical clinical findings, including
  - a. determining whether the pain originates in bone, joint, or soft tissue.
  - b. localizing the site of pain (e.g., unilateral or bilateral) and the site of pathology (e.g., referred pain).
  - c. recognizing signs and symptoms suggestive of serious disease;
  - d. calculating leg length discrepancies;
  - e. describing stance and gait;
- list and interpret critical investigations, including
  - a. appropriate diagnostic imaging modalities (e.g., X-ray, nuclear scan);
- constructing an effective initial management plan, including
  - a. determining if the patient requires specialized care, including referral to other health care professionals;
  - b. in the case of a child persistent pain or limp, determining if further assessment is needed.