

# IS IT REALLY GROWING PAINS?

**7 simple signs every parent  
should know!**



Dr Brenden Brown  
Podiatrist

# **Is it really Growing Pains?**

## **Is this really normal?**

So, your little one is having a tough time and, therefore, so are you! There's something not quite right but you just can't put your finger on it.

One of the most frustrating things for a parent or carer is having a child that, for no known apparent reason, wakes at night in tears due to pain in their feet, legs and lower limbs. Often, they'll be in tears with pain. You may have tried massaging them, applying heat packs, or administering Panadol and/or Nurofen.

Perhaps you have noticed other little things, perhaps they seem clumsy, or they trip and fall a little more than their friends of the same age. Maybe they don't want to walk distances. Perhaps it appears they tire out more than the other kids. Something's not quite right?

## **What you need is answers!**

You head to the GP to tell them the things you've noticed. Frustratingly you're told;

"they will grow out of it" or...

"it's growing pains" or...

"All kids get that" or ...

"There's nothing that you can do" or...

"Oh, it's completely normal"

Whaaaaaat – You scream!!!

As a parent the last thing you want to hear from your health practitioner is "there's nothing you can do" or the equivalent. Kids shouldn't have to put up with pain! Ongoing pain killers are not an answer. There must be more to it?

# **NOT all children's lower limb pain is a result of growing pains!**

There is very little evidence to prove that “growing pains” even exist! Many GPs and other health practitioners can often be as confused about what to do, as you are.

A reliable alternative diagnosis is **ACTIVITY INDUCED MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN**, this is a result of the muscles in the child's lower legs over working in an effort to support the foot that is not aligned properly. When the foot is not aligned properly it requires the surrounding postural muscles to over work and therefore become at times unbearably uncomfortable.

## **Making sure YOU know what's wrong and what's right!**

This list of six signs to identify growing pains has been compiled to empower you, to help you know when it is that you can confidently and safely say “I think there is more we can do!” The points below identify key differences in the signs and symptoms between ‘growing pains’ and ‘activity-induced musculoskeletal pain’.

Being able to identify whether it is or isn't ‘growing pains’ allows you to make an active choice in how to treat your child's pain. The knowledge that if it is NOT “growing pains” empowers you to access the help your child needs to get out of pain and into healthy activity!

If you have experienced a child who is in pain, waking at night, sore legs ankles or feet, it can be heart breaking, as a Dad I put my hand up that it was for me!

From one parent to another I truly hope this helps. I wish you and your family the best of health and happiness.

Let's get moving!

Yours Sincerely  
Dr Brenden Brown  
Principal Podiatrist  
A Step Ahead Foot + Ankle care



# Is it really growing pains?

## 7 simple signs every parent should know!



## GROWING PAINS

### **1** Growing Pains can occur **ANYWHERE** in the body.

Growing pains are NOT isolated to one half of your body! That's right this pain to be true "Growing pains" should occur in BOTH the upper and lower body. NOT one or the other.

Consider this—as we watch kids grow they don't develop enormous bodies and tiny heads! They grow fairly evenly. Your child's bones all grow, from head right down to their toes! If pain occurs as a result of growing, why is it that these kids don't get pain in their jaw? Or their shoulder or their arms? If pain is a result of 'growing pains' your child's pain should be reasonably evenly distributed through their body!



## Is it really growing pains?

7 simple signs every parent should know!



### 2

## Growing pains Does Not have a history or connections to recent physical activity

True growing pains will occur in children at any time. They will occur in super active children “little tornados” but are just as likely to strike in kids that are much less active or ‘couch potatoes’. Pain is not a result of activity; ‘growing pains’ can occur in kids who have done virtually NOTHING for weeks or days.

If your child has completed activity, such as a sport, been on a long walk, had long periods of standing, you can discount ‘growing pains’; it’s unlikely the cause of their pain.





### 3

**It's NOT growing pains if: Pain is ONLY in lower limbs Hips, legs Ankles + feet!**

Activity Based Musculoskeletal Pain is Located in lower limbs from hips and below

If your pain is located EXCLUSIVELY in your child's lower limbs only – unless you truly believe this is the only place your child grows – it's NOT GROWING PAINS!

Activity-induced musculoskeletal pain is generally a result of the muscles in the feet, ankles, legs and hips over compensating for poor foot posture. This can be easily fixed and your child can make a speedy recovery.

# Is it really growing pains?

7 simple signs every parent should know!



## 4

**It's NOT growing pains if: There is history of sport or activity within the last 48 hours.**

This one factor can often be tricky for people. Let's first talk about that time you decided to take up a gym membership. Remember the first day you rushed to the gym and got stuck into your new fitness program with vigour. At the end of your session all was fine, perhaps you felt a little tired but nothing a healthy shake wouldn't fix. The next day you were ok but something wasn't right. By the third day 'OUCHIE Mumma!' you were in pain. Welcome to DOMS – Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness. Now let's think about kids and activity.

Kids with pain from activity frequently display a similar pattern. Look at the activity they did 24 – 48 hours before the onset of pain. If you have poor foot posture it's like doing a workout at the gym every time you work those feet; the muscles are working triple time to do what normal feet do. As a parent this can be tricky; it can be difficult to recall what happened 24 -48 hours ago, heck as a parent myself I'm hard up remembering what I had that day for breakfast!

Running walking, kicking, skipping and hopping all have something in common; they actively use your lower limbs! Think sports, long periods of walking or standing— these are all great activities to do as a family but they can be difficult, tiring and, if your child's foot posture isn't quite right, can eventually cause pain!



# Is it really growing pains?

7 simple signs every parent should know!



**5**

**It's NOT growing pains if: It becomes worse as your child continues activity.**

Do more = more pain! That's right, pain will generally get worse with more activity. In contrast 'growing pains' have no rhyme or reason as to when they occur. Kids with pain from activity will find that as they continue to participate in the activity the pain will become worse. Other pains, such as Sever's type pain for example, while painful to begin with often goes away shortly after starting activity.





## 6

**It's NOT growing pains if: Your child's pain may be temporarily relieved by pain relief medication or massage.**

Massage therapy will generally help activity-induced musculoskeletal pain temporarily, as it's very similar to muscular pain that adults get when they over work their muscles. Growing pains won't get better with massage. You can't massage your bones into stopping growing. Growing pains continue no matter what you do.

Paracetamol and ibuprofen-based medications will also relieve activity-induced pain in children. Just like it does for adults!



**7**

## **It's NOT growing pains if: The PAIN stops when your child STOPS activity!**

“My Doctor told me to just get them to rest” let’s make it clear! REST is NOT a TREATMENT! AGAIN – Rest is NOT A TREATMENT!

Yes, your child’s pain will stop but that means they also stop healthy, life transforming activity and all the benefits of that! Think social aspects of mixing with other team sports, family etc the list goes on!

If your child stops activity for a reasonable amount of time, there is a good chance that the pain will stop (not a miracle). However, it will most likely START AGAIN when they again get back into activity!

Growing Pains has NO relation to activity!

A final point: if this pain really is a result of “Growing” why would ceasing activity stop the pain? Do you stop growing when you cease moving?



# Is it really growing pains?

7 simple signs every parent should know!



## Is there anything you can do to help your child?

YES, the nice side of activity-induced pain is that it can be treated very successfully.

You should now be able to identify several differences between mysterious 'Growing Pains' and Activity-induced Musculoskeletal Pain.

In most cases activity-induced pain is a result of posture problems in your child's feet and lower limbs, and is associated with muscle overuse, which CAN be treated.

## What are reliable treatments for Activity induced Musculoskeletal Pain.

- Footwear advice
- Foot Posture assessment
- Prescription orthotics (Soft pliable a must DON'T go rigid)
- Soft tissue therapy (e.g. DCT Massage paired with orthotics)
- Warm up and training modifications
- Progressive muscle loading



## Where to from here?



With at least 7 solid things to look out for you are now empowered with some choice!

If you have been to a practitioner and sadly not received the advice or assistance you'd have hoped for, it may be a good time to speak to them about the above ideas! While many practitioners may well love the opportunity to look at something new, if they aren't it may be time to look for someone equipped to help you deal with this horrible problem.

Even Podiatrists have different exposure to this condition. Some great podiatrists are out there, but they are set up to see your Nan and Pops and cut their toe nails. They may only see someone who has this type of pain once or twice a month! Our team see this condition each and every day!

## How can we help?

Yes, we would LOVE to be able to help and Our team LOVE LOVE LOVE helping kids! This pain can be frustrating and people are often confused about the best treatment for them. We find it best if you give our front desk team a call to run through what's in particular is going on for you, this helps us establish what type of appointment maybe best. We will run through some of the things you have tried, if you've had any success at all. We pride ourselves on not just 'taking a booking', but taking the time to find out how we can help you the best.

Our team speak to oodles of people as you'd imagine and once we have a more detailed understanding of what's going on they can run through different options and types of appointments.

We can then run through costings and times we have available for the appointment you need. Then we can reserve your appointment time.

## Set up to help kids.

Our Doctors all board registered Podiatrists are very experienced in seeing kids. Our practitioners help multiple kids a day, unlike conventional podiatrist who may only see one child a week at times. At times after that school bell sounds our practice looks like a day care centre!

Our practices are set up with kids in mind, old fashioned arcade games and toys for younger kids. A very cool fish tank that seems to keep everyone entertained no matter your age. With a team that can talk to kids on their level!

We are open most days from 8am to 6pm, closed weekends. Our team are really happy to spend time working with you. We pride ourselves on not just booking people in, but taking the time to find out how we can help you the best.

Call today on +61 2 9673 2987 (We are open most days from 8am—6pm. Closed weekends.)



## Still uncertain? Make the most of our FREE 10-minute telephone consult



Would you like to speak to a qualified Foot Doctor to review your child's problem with you over the phone? Many patients take advantage of our 10-minute Review service\*, which involves a telephone call with one of our experienced and highly professional team members to discuss your concerns. You can choose to speak to either one of our Experienced Clinical assistants or an Expert Foot Doctor who is a qualified Podiatrist.

Our Doctors or Assistants will run through the treatments you've previously tried and they will be able to offer some insights on the new options that might help your child back on track. Feedback from these reviews has been outstanding! These reviews are enormously helpful BUT **book out very quickly!**

**A Step Ahead Expert Foot reviews are Strictly Limited** to particular local areas. Numbers of these reviews are also Strictly Limited! As you will imagine our team is very busy so we have found the need to limit these highly valuable reviews as a consequence they are book out quickly.

Head to our webpage and enter your details and we will let you know about availability.

### Thank you

Thanks for taking the time to read our report we hope you have found it helpful. We wish you the very best in getting your young one back to Happy Healthy and Active!





## About Dr Brenden Brown

Our Principal Podiatrist Brenden Brown is recognised as an expert in podiatry. A past President of the Australasian Podiatry Association, he is considered a medical authority in the area of foot health, appearing regularly on television shows like The Today Show and in magazines such as Men's Health.

He has been the go-to specialist on lower limb conditions for ABC radio's The Waiting Room and several other health programs across Australia.

Brenden has more than 20 years experience as a Board Registered Podiatrist. He has significant experience in lecturing other health professionals including Podiatrists, Physiotherapist and General Practitioners.

While he is still practicing his lecturing, education and other professional commitments means he sees a limited number of patients each month.