

Frequently Asked Questions for Perthes Disease

Is Perthes Disease curable?

It is not curable because we don't know the cause. However, it is a self-healing disease, meaning the body is able to heal the bone in the femoral head that is affected. The healing process and the duration of the disease vary from patient to patient. The clinical outcome also varies, depending on the age of the patient, the extent of femoral head involvement, and the lateral pillar height.

Will my child ever be able to run again or be involved in sports?

In our experience, most patients are able to return to running and sports once the femoral head is in the mid re-ossification or healed stage.

Why do they call it a "disease?"

It is a disease because it adversely affects the cells in the femoral head and affects hip function and development.

Should I expect a lot of complaints of pain?

Pain generally suggests that there is hip joint inflammation and your child may be doing too much activity that irritates the inflammation. The amount of pain experienced by a child with Perthes disease varies from patient to patient. Some patients complain of activity-related pain or night pain only. Your child may complain of groin, thigh or knee pain. They may have restricted movement and a mild limp. You and your child's doctor will discuss how to manage pain.

How does the hip grow back?

Although the blood flow to a part or all of the femoral head is disrupted and stops the femoral head from growing, healing will occur over time since tissue around the affected femoral head is alive and is able to respond to the abnormal change. In many patients, especially those with early onset of the disease (before age 6), normal growth is restored as the new vessels enter the dead bone and start the healing process. In older patients, restoration of normal growth of the hip is not as predictable.

Will my child need a hip replacement? If so, when?

Hip replacement is not a surgery for children. Only if a patient develops painful degenerative arthritis later in adulthood is the hip replacement surgery warranted. Even with a deformed femoral head, most patients can perform daily activities and sports activities once the hip has healed.

What activities are safe or beneficial for my child?

We would recommend a consultation with your physician to determine the activities that are safe and beneficial because the answer would depend on the stage of the disease, your child's symptoms, hip joint stiffness and your child's age.

