

Growing Pains in Children

Many adults remember the deep, aching pains that would afflict us during times of adolescent growth and now these same adults may have their own children going through what are commonly known as ‘growing pains.’

Not all children suffer growing pains, or perhaps not to an overly bothersome extent. Still, there are those for whom this seemingly trivial rite of physical passage is almost incapacitating; they will frequently cry over the level of pain, especially at night. The symptoms will tend to be deep, generalized--almost severe--achy pains in the back, hips, knees or shoulder joints or muscles coupled with diffuse palpitory pain. This can last for months either constantly or intermittently. A severe case may find the young patient being imaged with plain films or CAT scans with further work-ups to rule-out severe pathologies such as rheumatoid or Osgood-Schlatter’s disease. In one (not at all unusual) heartbreaking case the mother and 12-yr. old daughter were informed after 3 months of referrals and testing that, “...there is nothing wrong with her joints and muscles... She is likely acting out to gain attention or avoid responsibility.”

The symptoms are of three etiologies. Your long bones (arm, thigh) are comprised of three segments; the longest part is the *diaphysis*. Next to the ends are the *metaphysis* and on the ends are the *epiphyseal plates*. Growth takes place at the metaphysis as the cartilage stretches and is turned into calcified cortical bone. This addition of new bone with the corresponding stretching can create pressure on the nerves (yes, the coverings of bones have tiny nerves) resulting in a primary aching pain. In addition to this, human bodies do not grow evenly and this places secondary strains on different parts of the anatomy again resulting in the characteristic complaints of aching joints and muscles. In addition the growth action places stress where tendons and ligaments attach to bone and this pulling can be v. painful as well; this would be analogous to Tennis Elbow in adults.

Of course, this is where chiropractic treatment comes in. In much less time than it takes to talk about it, adjustments to the spine and extremities will usually resolve the symptoms dramatically, usually right now. This has repeatedly been the outcome for cases such as our 12-yr. old who limped-in, was acutely sensitive to palpation and was then essentially without symptoms 5-minutes later after being adjusted.

Children respond dramatically to chiropractic-type treatment. This should be a first consideration when a parent is confronted with a colicky or achy or uncomfortable child. Working in tandem with the child’s pediatrician or primary doctor, we may well save you time, money and aggravation even as we make your child feel better, sooner.

