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Limb Pain Syndromes

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6. Benign Hypermobility Syndrome

6.1 What is it?

Hypermobility refers to children who have flexible or loose joints. It is also called joint laxity. Some children may experience pain. Benign Hypermobility Syndrome (BHS) refers to children who present limb pain due to increased mobility (range of motion) of the joints, without any associated connective tissue disease. Therefore, BHS is not a disease but rather a variation of the norm.

6.2 How common is it?

BHS is an extremely common condition in children and youngsters, present in 10 to 30% of children younger than 10 years of age and particularly in girls. Its frequency decreases with age. It frequently runs in families.

6.3 What are the main symptoms?

Hypermobility frequently results in intermittent, deep aching and recurrent pains at the end of the day or at night in the knees, feet and/or ankles. In children playing piano, violin, etc., it might affect the fingers instead. Physical activity and exercise may trigger or increase the pain. Rarely, mild joint swelling may be present.

6.4 How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis is made on the basis of a pre-defined set of criteria that

quantify joint mobility and the absence of other signs of connective tissue disease.

6.5 How can we treat it?

Treatment is very seldom necessary. If the child plays certain repetitive impact sports such as football or gymnastics, and develops recurrent sprains/torn joints, muscle strengthening and joint protection (elastic or supportive bandages, sleeves) should be used.

6.6 What about everyday life?

Hypermobility is a benign condition, which tends to resolve with age. Families should be aware that its main risk comes from preventing children from living normal lives.
Children should be encouraged to maintain a normal level of activity, including being involved in any sports in which they are interested.