

Legg Calvé Perthes

Perthes is a disease which involves the hips. It is caused by avascular necrosis of the femoral head. Avascular necrosis occurs when the blood flow to the femoral head is interrupted. There are numerous theories as to what causes avascular necrosis in children; however, the cause is unclear. The avascular necrosis creates soft spots in the femoral head which causes flattening of the femoral head. Children often come to the physician with a limp and complaints of pain. Pain may present in the knee.

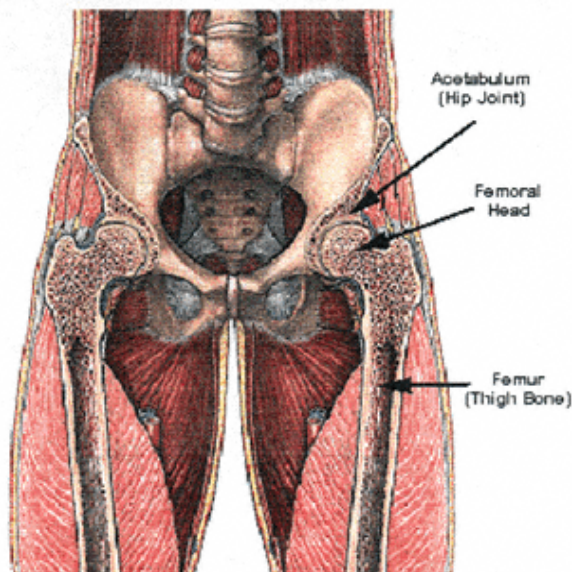
Diagnosis is based on history, physical exam, and x-rays. Treatment depends on the amount of femoral head involvement, and is designed to protect the femoral head during the healing process so it stays round. Mild forms are treated with bed rest. Bed rest can be combined with traction. Traction may be done at home.

Home traction can be set up with a local home health agency. The agency will be responsible for assisting the family with traction set up and monitoring visits until the family is comfortable with the traction process. Bed rest and traction are very important for the healing process. These treatment measures allow the hip to rest and be contained within the hip joint. Bed rest promotes healing; traction limits movement so the hip can begin to heal the soft spots. The head of the femur depends on the acetabulum (hip joint) to mold it and keep it round.

As the femoral head becomes more involved, treatment becomes more involved. This can include hospitalization for traction, further radiological exams and possible surgical intervention. Treatment for Perthes can last up to two years and will continue until the hip is healed.

Wake Forest University Baptist

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