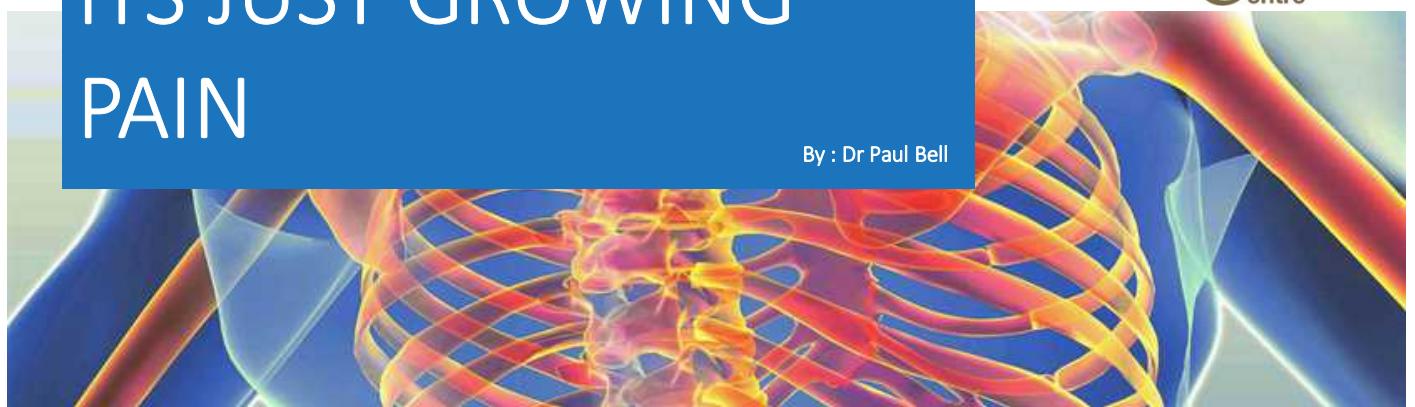


ITS JUST GROWING PAIN

By : Dr Paul Bell

the
OSTEOPATHIC
Centre



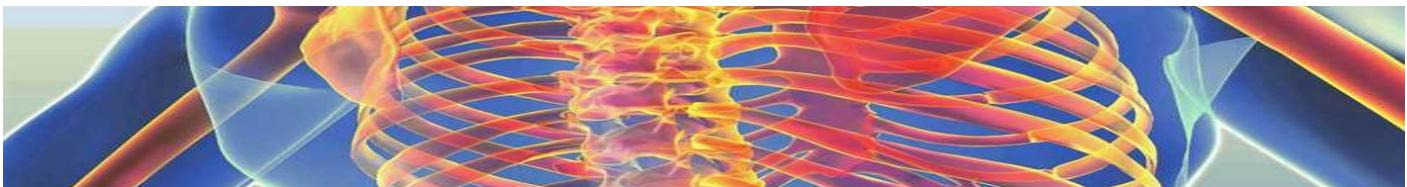
DEALING WITH GROWING PAIN

"Its just growing pains, get on with it" was my school rugby coaches' reply, when I told him my right knee was painful. In fact because I was fourteen years old, going through a growth spurt, playing a lot of sport and not stretching enough, my quadriceps (thigh) muscles had become so tight that they created an abnormal pull on the tendon that attaches these muscles to the knee. Causing inflammation of this attachment, a condition known as Osgood-Schlatter disease that gave me two years of chronic knee pain. Unfortunately, I didn't fully understand this until many years later, after learning about the various injuries that can affect children as they grow and develop.

Times have moved on and thankfully parents and teachers are much more aware of the potential injuries that can affect the developing body. However, there are still many children visiting my clinic complaining of what could be described as growth related problems. The majority of the time, when a child or teenager complains of "Growing pains", they are just that. There is usually no obvious cause, and they present as aches and pains in the muscles. The symptoms will disappear without any further intervention needed, although if they are distressed it can be helpful to do some gentle massage, heat treatment (such as hot baths) and get them to stretch more to help speed up the healing process.

"Postural strain in children is becoming a more prevalent problem."





More serious problems can arise, when the child/teenager's body is subjected to increased or repetitive strain during the development phase. This may be a result of over exercise from sport or dance, or can be induced by poor posture. The strain is beyond what the body can cope with, leading to injury and pain.

Perhaps the two most common injuries due to overuse are Osgood-Schlatters (knee) and Sever's (heel) disease. Both affect the attachment of the tendon to the bone and lead to increased pain in the respective areas, especially during and post sport, although the pain will be prolonged as the condition deteriorates. The best treatment for these conditions is rest with treatment of the inflamed area, and correct advice on stretching and exercise management. Both conditions generally respond very well to this approach.

Postural strain in children is becoming a more prevalent problem. It can be due to an underlying structural cause, such as scoliosis (lateral curvature of the spine) but often is because of external factors, such as a poor studying position, heavy school bag or playing of computer games. There are several different reasons for scoliosis of the spine and its treatment is dependant on the cause, so if you notice any abnormal curvature in the spine, professional assessment is recommended. Its not always easy to make children see that what they do with their body now can effect their posture as an adult, but the problem can be managed if they can be encouraged to carry out a small amount of stretches and some easy postural exercises.

So, the old saying „prevention is better than cure“ is the important thing to remember when dealing with developmental growth problems in children. Some relatively easy prevention methods are:

- Make sure your child stretches after sport/physical activity and encourage their teachers/coaches to do the same.
- If your child is very active and participates in a lot of sport, try to mix their routine; for example, football one day with swimming the next. This is better than football four days in a row.
- Ensure your child has the correct size footwear for the sport they are doing.
- Try and encourage them to use a desk or table when studying.
- Emphasize the importance of regular breaks when studying or using the P.C/ playing video games
- Persuade them to use a rucksack, as the schoolbags tend to be extremely heavy. If a rucksack is not an option, then a bag slung across the body is better than on one shoulder.

Children's bodies heal faster than us oldies, so if your child/teenager is complaining of pain or discomfort on a regular basis, or if it is progressively worsening then it is probably wise to have them assessed by a qualified practitioner.

The Osteopathic Centre Pte Ltd

CENTRAL

Park Avenue Rochester, 31 Rochester
Drive, Level 24, Singapore 138637
Tel: +65 6221 1977

CITY (CBD)

11 Collyer Quay, #06-05 The Arcade,
Singapore 049317
Tel: +65 6221 4064

EAST COAST

20 Siglap Drive, #01-02 Bowmont Centre,
Singapore 456192
Tel: +65 6446 7236