

Is It a Growing Pain or Something Else?

By Amy Bentley



Dr. Andrew Shulman
CHOC Pediatric
Arthritis Specialist and
Rheumatologist

Dr. Shulman specializes in the diagnosis and management of pediatric autoimmune and inflammatory conditions. As a pediatric rheumatologist, Dr. Shulman cares for patients with juvenile arthritis, lupus and other auto-inflammatory diseases. He also has expertise in treating patients with Pain Amplification Syndrome, a condition where a patient has abnormal pain sensitivity. Dr. Shulman completed his residency in Pediatrics and fellowship in Pediatric Rheumatology at Boston Children's Hospital and the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

Dr. Shulman's philosophy of care: "My philosophy of care is to provide a multidisciplinary patient and family-centered approach in the evaluation of musculoskeletal symptoms and the treatment of autoimmune and inflammatory conditions."

EDUCATION:

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, Texas

BOARD CERTIFICATIONS:

Pediatric Rheumatology

ARE "GROWING PAINS" REAL?

"Growing pains are real because many children experience musculoskeletal pain," says Dr. Andrew Shulman, a CHOC Children's Pediatric Rheumatologist (Arthritis Specialist). "It's a very common symptom but not a good name because we don't think it's related to growth. Typically, you will have a toddler or school-age child who in the evening after an active day or prolonged walking will complain of pain often in the ankles or legs. It can be in the calves, thighs or behind the knees. Sometimes the child will wake up in the middle of the night in pain, sometimes in tears. Usually the pain responds to massage, which the child finds soothing."

294,000

NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 AFFECTED BY PEDIATRIC ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATOLOGIC CONDITIONS IN THE U.S.

1.7-8.4 million

NUMBER OF CHILDREN WORLDWIDE WITH JUVENILE ARTHRITIS; MOST ARE PROBABLY UNDIAGNOSED



CAUSES AND JOINT PROTECTION

"We think the most common cause for this type of musculoskeletal pain is flexible joints. This means the ligaments that hold the bones together at the joint are a little bit loose. They can flex and extend through a longer range of motion. Repetitive movement at the extremes of range of motion appears to cause strain and discomfort," says Dr. Shulman, adding that the pain can also have orthopedic causes for which a child can be evaluated. "It helps if these kids stay active so they can get stronger. Strengthening the muscles that support the joints provides protection for the joints."

ARTHRITIS IN CHILDREN

"Kids do get arthritis. It's not a common condition but it is certainly not rare," says Dr. Shulman. According to the Arthritis Foundation:

- Arthritis is a complex family of musculoskeletal disorders consisting of more than 100 different conditions that affect joints, bones, muscles, cartilage and other connective tissues, hampering or halting physical movement.
- Juvenile arthritis is an umbrella term used to describe the many autoimmune and inflammatory conditions that can develop in children ages 16 and younger.
- The cause for most forms of juvenile arthritis remains unknown.



50 YEARS OF EXPERT CARE

For almost 50 years, CHOC Children's physicians, nurses and staff have been devoted to improving the lives of children and families in our community. As home to the region's only dedicated pediatric emergency department and other world-class services and programs, from cardiology and neurosurgery to neonatology and orthopedics, CHOC is committed to being the leading destination for children's health by providing exceptional and innovative care.

For information on the expert care we provide and the health plans we accept, visit choc.org

Almost \$128 billion

ANNUAL COST TO THE U.S. ECONOMY FOR ARTHRITIS AND RELATED CONDITIONS, INCLUDING JUVENILE ARTHRITIS



Experts In: Dealing with Growing Bones Learn more about joints and bones at choc.org/health.

