

Bowlegs

What are Bowlegs?

Bowleg (also known as genu varum or “bow legs”) is a condition that causes both legs to curve outward. It typically can be seen when a child stands with the feet together and a space appears between the lower legs and knees.

Many children are born with bowleg, but bowing of legs usually goes away by the time a child is 2 and has been walking for a while.

What Causes Bowlegs?

Bowleg occurs most frequently in females and in African-American children. Children who are obese, or short, or who began walking early, are also at an increased risk for bowleg.

Bowlegs can be caused by:

- Blount’s disease, a growth disorder of the shin bone (also known as the tibia) possibly caused by effects of weight on the growth plate.
- Abnormal development or malformation of the bones.
- Bone fractures that do not heal properly.
- Lead or fluoride poisoning.
- Rickets, caused by a vitamin D deficiency.

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Bowlegs Symptoms and Effects

Depending on the cause of bowleg, symptoms can differ from person to person. The most common signs and symptoms are:

- Knees that don’t touch when the feet are together and ankles are touching.
- Bowlegs that are present well after your child begins walking.
- Problems with the knee joints, when caused by Blount’s disease.
- Bowing that increases with time, when caused by Blount’s disease.

If the bowing is excessive, or if the condition persists into adolescence or adulthood, pain and problems with knee joint function are common long-term effects.

Bowlegs Diagnosis and Treatment

Bowleg can typically be diagnosed during a physical examination by measuring the distance between the knees.

Bowleg correction at Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare—a nationally and internationally recognized leader in pediatric orthopedics—can include:

- X-rays to determine if the condition is worsening or if it affects one side more than another.
- Testing (often blood testing) to confirm the presence of any underlying medical conditions.
- Braces or other orthopedic devices to help straighten the legs.
- In some severe cases, surgery can alter the bone's position or growth and correct lower-limb alignment.

Integrated Care

With one of the largest groups of fellowship-trained pediatric orthopedic surgeons in the nation, your family has access to comprehensive expertise in the treatment of bowlegs at Gillette.

An integrated team will help you navigate the services you need—collaborating with your primary care providers, teachers and school or community therapists. For bowleg treatment, your family might work with experts in:

- Casting.
- Nursing.
- **Occupational therapy.**
- **Orthopedics.**
- **Orthotics.**
- **Physical therapy.**

[Make An Appointment](#) **651-290-8707** [Refer a Patient](#) **651-325-2200**

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](#).