

Hypermobility

What Is Hypermobility?

Hypermobility means a person's joints move beyond a normal range of motion. Children who have hypermobility disorder might experience it in one or more joints, and might say they have "loose joints" or describe themselves as "double jointed."

Some children show symptoms of hypermobility in four or more joints, and might experience pain as a result. This condition is called benign joint hypermobility syndrome, or simply joint hypermobility syndrome.

Joint hypermobility is usually hereditary, and occurs more frequently in children than in adults. Between 10 and 15 percent of children have joint hypermobility. Females and people who have Asian backgrounds are more likely to have the condition.

What Causes Hypermobility?

Our genes produce a protein that supports healthy functioning of connective tissues such as joints, tendons and ligaments. Known in medical terms as "collagen," this protein determines our natural flexibility.

In rare cases, hypermobility in children is related to inherited disorders, such as [Ehlers-Danlos syndrome](#) and Marfan syndrome that cause abnormalities in connective tissues.

Hypermobility Symptoms and Effects

Some common symptoms experienced by children who have joint hypermobility include:

- Joint and muscle pain.
- Increased vulnerability to injuries, sprains and strains.
- Flat feet and ankles that roll inward (or pronate).
- Frequent tripping or falling.
- Possible delayed gross motor skills.
- Abnormal walking patterns (also known as gait).

Specialists often discover hypermobility when a child comes in for another condition, such as:

- Joint pain or fatigue.
- Deformities including [flatfoot](#), bunions, [clubfoot](#), dislocations or [developmental dysplasia of the hip](#).
- Swollen joints.

- Injuries including recurrent sprains or dislocations.
- Developmental delay.
- Clumsiness.
- Abnormal walking patterns.

Hypermobility Diagnosis and Treatment

Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare specialists use the Beighton scale to determine if your child has joint hypermobility. The scale consists of the following hypermobility tests, each worth one point. If your child scores four or higher on the scale, they probably have joint hypermobility.

- [Beighton Scale](#)
- Can you put your hands flat on the floor and keep your knees straight?
- Can you bend your right elbow backwards?
- Can you bend your left elbow backwards?
- Can you bend your right knee backwards?
- Can you bend your left knee backwards?
- Can you bend your right thumb to the front of your forearm?
- Can you bend your left thumb to the front of your forearm?
- Can you bend your right little finger 90 degrees, toward the back of your hand?
- Can you bend your left little finger 90 degrees, toward the back of your hand?

You'll get a hypermobility treatment plan customized for your child when you work with specialists at Gillette. If there are few symptoms, treatment might not be necessary. With more severe symptoms, however, our experts might recommend treatments that include steps to help:

- Minimize pain.
- Prevent injury.
- Stabilize joint function.

Here are a few of the treatment types specialists at Gillette might recommend for your child.

[Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy](#)

Specialists in physical therapy and occupational therapy might evaluate your child's gross motor skills. We will also educate patients and families on joint protection, such as avoiding extreme range of motion and stretching safely. Your child's treatment might include:

- Exercises that improve balance and coordination.
- Exercises that reduce pain and stabilize joints.
- Customized footwear and braces (also known as orthoses).
- Options for maintaining an active lifestyle.
- Ways to safely participate in sports activities.
- Posture instruction.
- **Aquatic (pool) therapy.**
- Strategies for decreasing pain when writing.
- Hand splints or bracing.
- Coping strategies for fatigue.

Psychology

Psychologists can work with your family to develop strategies for managing pain caused by joint hypermobility. These strategies might include relaxation techniques or coping tools for anxiety.

Therapeutic Recreation

Therapeutic recreation specialists can help find the right recreational activities in your community, and can help create lifelong fitness plans.

Nutrition

Nutritionists work closely with your family to develop a weight management plan if needed. Maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce joint strain.

Medicines

Treatment for hypermobility starts with fitness and a healthy lifestyle. In special cases, however, kids who have moderate pain might benefit from pain relievers such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

Integrated Care

If your child has hypermobility, our multidisciplinary team of specialists will create a treatment plan specifically designed to meet their unique needs. Gillette experts also offer support for related issues, such as physical growth and joint pain.

Your child might meet with internationally recognized specialists in:

- [Rheumatology](#).
- [Cardiology](#).
- [Medical Genetics and Genetic Counseling](#).
- [Orthopedics](#).
- [Physical therapy](#).

At Gillette, you'll have a family-centered team that works closely with your primary care providers, teachers, and school or community therapists.

[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](#).