

Treatment for your child's SUFE hip condition

Children's Hospital

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Information for Patients

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What is SUFE?

The hip joint is a ball and socket joint. The top of the femur (thigh bone) forms the ball (known as the femoral head) and underneath this ball is a growth plate (epiphyseal plate).

SUFE stands for 'Slipped Upper Femoral Epiphysis'. It is when the ball or 'femoral head' slips out of position. This causes pain which limits hip movement causing limping and the pain is often felt in the knee. It is a bit like a fracture through the growth plate. It can happen suddenly with an injury (acute) or it can happen gradually over days and weeks (chronic).

What causes it?

The cause is unknown. It usually happens at puberty between the ages of 11-15 years old. It is thought to be associated with hormones and a growth spurt however being overweight can contribute to the problem.

Diagnosis and Treatment

An x-ray will confirm the diagnosis. Treatment requires an operation under general anaesthetic (whilst asleep) to stabilise the growth plate to the femur to prevent further slipping, this is done using pins or a screw. Your surgeon will discuss the operation and options with you before signing a consent form.

After the operation

After the operation your child will return to the ward and be closely monitored by their nurse. They will be allowed to eat and drink. Pain will be assessed and controlled with pain relief.

The following day the physiotherapist will help your child to move around and show them how

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to use crutches. They will not be able to put weight on the leg for six weeks, this is called non weight bearing. They will require the use of the crutches for at least twelve weeks. This may change according to your surgeons advice.

Wound Care

The wound will be covered with a small dressing but this may be changed before you go home if it has become dirty. The stitches are usually dissolvable so will not need to be removed but the ends sometimes need snipping which is done in an outpatient clinic, this will be arranged when you go home. It is important to keep the wound clean and dry. Your child may shower after the wound has healed; bathing is not advised as getting in and out of the bath will be difficult.

Your child will be discharged from hospital on the advice of the doctors and when the physiotherapist is happy that they are safe using the crutches. This is usually within 2-3 days.

You should make sure you have paracetamol and ibuprofen at home.

Advice about returning to sports will be given by your surgeon, this is usually after three months.

Complications

- Infection - this is uncommon but if it happens it will be treated with antibiotics
- Some scarring may occur from the wound
- There may be some altered sensation around the wound, this will fade in time
- It is unlikely to come back on the same side, but may happen on the other side
- Some severe types of SUFE will need more complex surgery and the management may be different. Your doctor will talk to you about this if necessary

Paediatric Orthopaedic Consultants

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