

# Fact Sheet

## Slipped capital femoral epiphysis (SCFE)

Page 1



### What is SCFE?

This condition affects the hips of older children and adolescents. The hip is a ball and socket joint. In children the ball is connected to the femur (thigh bone) by a growth plate. As the growth of the femur slows down, the ball can slip. If this occurs it can cause the leg to turn outwards by changing the shape of the top of the femur. This can affect how the joint works. Instead of hip pain, some children may have a pain in the thigh or knee (called referred pain) from SCFE.

### What is the cause?

The condition affects both boys and girls. There is thought to be a link between increased weight, the shape and position of the femur (called retroversion) and the hormones of puberty.

### What problems will occur?

If left untreated SCFE will get worse, and can lead to arthritis in the hip. Treatment helps to reduce the risk of later arthritis.

### What treatment will be needed?

Surgery will be needed to stabilize the condition. One or two screws are put into the ball of the femur to prevent

further movement. This can be done through a very small cut. Your child will have a short stay in hospital and their hip will feel better straight away. Your child will need to move around on crutches for the next six weeks while the hip heals.

Some children with SCFE on one side can develop SCFE on the other hip. The other side will also be operated on at the first sign of any hip trouble. The screws aren't usually removed unless they are bothering the patient. They should definitely not be removed before the child stops growing.

Some children have a more acute condition called unstable SCFE. This condition carries the added risk of an injury to the femoral head blood supply and will require more complex treatment. Your doctor will discuss this with you if it applies to your child.

### Remember

- Children with SCFE need surgery but usually lead full active lives after their hips have healed.
- SCFE can occur later on the other side. If the other hip is hurting see your doctor straight away.

This fact sheet is for education purposes only.  
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional  
to make sure this information is right for your child.

*This document was reviewed on Thursday, 7th December 2006.*

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