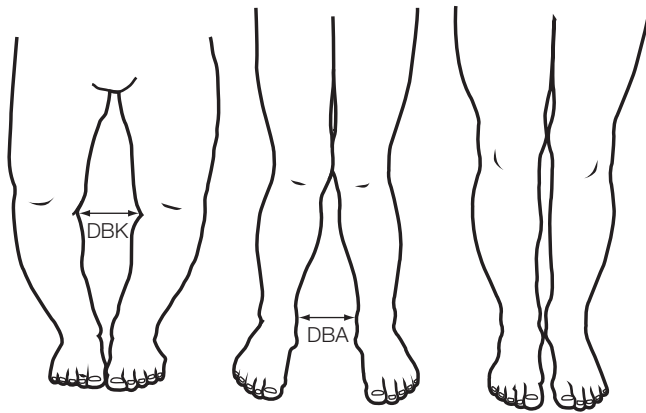


Bow legs and knock knees

Bow legs and *knock knees* are relatively common in infants and children but are usually no cause for concern. They are stages that children pass through and it is important to remember that most legs are perfectly straight by the teenage years.

Bow legs (genu varum)

Bow legs are very common up to the age of 3 years. In fact, they are quite normal up to the age of 2 or 3. This means that when the ankles are touching the knees are apart. Bow legs usually correct themselves when the child starts walking, so much so that from about the age of 4 there is a tendency for the child to develop knock knees.



(a) Bow legs (b) Knock knees (c) Mature position of legs

How can you check progress?

If you are concerned about the extent of the bow legs, the problem can be monitored by measuring the distance between the knees (DBK). If this is greater than 6 cm and not improving at 4 years and older, it is advisable to have them checked by your doctor.

Knock knees

Knock knees are also normal in children and most have these between the ages of 3 and 8 years. Running can be awkward, but improves with age.

The rule for normal 3-year-olds is:

- 50% have 3 to 5 cm between the ankles (DBA)
- 25% have more than 5 cm.

These invariably straighten nicely after 8 years.

How can you check progress?

For any concerns about the degree of knock knees, measure the distance between the ankles (DBA). It should be checked by your doctor if the DBA is greater than 8 cm after the age of 8 years and not improving.

In summary

It is normal for children to have:

- bow legs 0 to 3 years
- knock knees 3 to 8 years
- legs straight by adolescence.