

## **Division of Pediatric Orthopaedics**

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# **SLIPPED CAPITAL FEMORAL EPIPHYSIS (SCFE)**

## **What is SCFE?**

Slipped Capital Femoral Epiphysis (SCFE) is a condition in which the ball at the top of the thighbone slips out of place. The bone in the thigh is called the femur. The top of the thighbone is shaped like a ball and is called the epiphysis. SCFE occurs at this growth area. If the slip is severe, it can cause a lack of blood flow to the ball part of the thighbone. This can lead to permanent problems with hip movement. If left untreated, the ball can continue to slip. This leads to decreased hip motion and increased joint stiffness and pain (degenerative joint disease). SCFE occurs in about 2 out of 100,000 children. It is most often seen in children age 10 to 16 years old. It is more common in boys than girls. SCFE is more common in African-American children and in children who are overweight. SCFE may affect one hip or both hips.

## **What causes it?**

The true cause of SCFE is not known. It may be caused by increased weight on the thighbone, a growth spurt or hormonal changes in older children. It may also be caused by a twisting injury to the hip.

## **How does it affect my child?**

There are three types of SCFE:

- **Preslip:** This is where there is a widening of the growth area of the ball of the thighbone. The epiphysis has not slipped yet. Your child may limp occasionally and/or complain of pain in the groin, inside of the thigh or at the knee. This pain may be felt more with activity. X-rays done at this time may still look normal.
- **Acute.** This is when the epiphysis suddenly slips off the head of the femur. Your child may feel sudden, severe pain in the hip, groin, thigh and/or knee. There may be

limited hip movement. Your child may refuse to walk on the affected leg because of the pain. About 10% of patients with SCFE will have this type.

- **Chronic.** This is when the slip has occurred slowly over a long time. Your child may complain of pain in the groin, inner thigh or knee off and on for 2 or 3 weeks or longer. Your child may have limited motion and will be able to walk, but may limp. Your child may feel mild to moderate pain whenever the hip is moved. This is the most common type of SCFE.

### **How is it treated?**

Surgery may be needed to keep the epiphysis from slipping any further. First, your child will have x-rays to see how severe the SCFE is. Surgery may be scheduled for the same day your child has the x-rays or, your child may need to be admitted to the hospital until the surgery can be done.

After surgery, your child may stay overnight for one night. This is to be sure he or she is comfortable and can walk with crutches before going home.

### **What is the purpose of surgery?**

Surgery will help reduce damage to the hip joint. Without surgery, your child will have a greater risk of having arthritis in the hip. This could limit movement of the hip and cause pain later in life.

### **How is surgery done?**

- With your child under general anesthesia, an incision is made in the outer hip area.
- A pin or pins are placed into the femur at the hip. This will secure the slipped epiphysis onto the femur to keep it from slipping any further. X-rays are used during the surgery to help the surgeon see where to place the pins.
- The orthopedic surgeon will then stitch the incision closed. Sometimes stitches are used underneath the skin. These will dissolve on their own. Sometimes stitches or staples are used on the outside. These will need to be removed at your child's follow up visit.
- A bandage will be put over the incision. You will be shown how to care for the bandaged area.
- Your child may take pain medicine if he or she has discomfort. The doctor will usually prescribe Tylenol with Codeine. After a few days, your child can take over-the-counter Tylenol instead of the prescription medicine.

### **What restrictions will my child have after surgery?**

- Your child may not be allowed to walk on the leg that had surgery. The doctor will let you know. Your child will be shown how to walk with crutches before going home. The doctor will let you know when it is safe for your child to walk without crutches.
- Your child will not be able to participate in gym classes or any sports for about six months or until the doctor says it is okay. He or she should not run, swim, climb, ride a bike, roller blade or do other activities until the doctor says it is safe to do so.
- If your child has other restrictions, the doctor or physician assistant will explain them to you.

### **What follow up care will my child need?**

- Make an appointment for your child to see the orthopedic surgeon about 7 to 10 days after the surgery. Your child's incision will be checked. After that, your child will see the orthopedic surgeon and have x-rays taken every few months to make sure the hip is healing well.
- The pins usually do not need to be removed. The doctor will decide this.
- Patients who have a severe deformity because of the slip may need further surgery.
- If your child needs other follow up care, the doctor or nurse will explain this to you.

***ALERT!!!*** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information. This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.