

PERTHES DISEASE

Perthes disease (also known as Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, or Calve Perthes disease, or avascular necrosis) is a childhood disorder which affects the head of the femur (the ball of the ball and socket joint of the hip). In Perthes disease the blood supply to the growth plate of the bone at the end of the femur (called the epiphysis) becomes inadequate. As a result the bone softens and breaks down (a process called necrosis).

It is not clear why this blood vessel problem occurs in the femoral head. It is not due to injury, or to a general blood vessel problem. A child with Perthes' disease is usually otherwise well. Over several months the blood vessels regrow, and the blood supply returns to the 'dead' bone tissue. New bone tissue is then laid down and the femoral head regrows and remodels over several years. This is similar to how bone reforms and remodels after any 'normal' fracture or break to a bone, but takes longer.

The condition usually begins with hip or groin pain, or a limp. Sometimes knee pain is the first symptom. The pain persists and there may be wasting of the muscles in the upper thigh, shortening of the leg and stiffness of the hip, which can restrict movement and cause problems with walking.

When Perthes disease has been present for a long time the affected leg may appear to be shorter and thinner than the unaffected one.

Perthes disease is not really a disease, but that was the name given to it when it was first discovered.

*Children's needs are **individual** - some children may require additional support:*

- Administration of medication for pain relief
- Aspects of personal care, e.g. dressing, changing for PE
- Gross motor skills, particularly affecting PE and school sports
- Manoeuvring around in the school environment, using a walking aid
- Mobility, e.g. negotiating changes in surface, steps, etc.
- Tiredness associated with increased effort to move
- Wearing aids, e.g. leg braces, splints or a plaster cast. Aids may need to be adjusted during the school day, advice should be sought from the Children's Physiotherapy Service.

FURTHER INFO: The Perthes Association <http://www.perthes.org.uk>