

### The future

In many cases, children grow out of their hypermobility (their joints become less mobile with age) and the symptoms ease naturally.

However, research has shown that joints which are not protected by strong fit muscles may be more likely to develop osteoarthritis. The aim of all the treatments is to ensure that your child develops into a normal active child who is physically able to do everything they want to do, ensuring that their joints are protected by strong fit muscles. This may require a long-term commitment to a home exercise/management programme.

### Therapy support

During the initial diagnosis and establishment of the programme, you will have access to regular therapy to ensure your child is confident with their exercises and in managing their condition. In the long term, a home programme is the best way of managing JHS.

### Whittington Health

Magdala Avenue London N19 5NF

Phone: 020 7272 3070

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Adapted with permission by Susan Maillard, clinical specialist physiotherapist in paediatric rheumatology, and the rheumatology team at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust.

## Joint hypermobility syndrome (JHS)

### A patient's and parent's guide



## What is joint hypermobility syndrome (JHS)?

Joint hypermobility means some or all of a child's joints have an unusually large range of movement. This is assessed by moving your child's joints. Hypermobility syndrome has been recognised since 1967 and has since then been referred to by a variety of names.

It is believed that joint hypermobility is hereditary and is caused by genetically-determined changes to a type of protein called collagen. If collagen is weaker than it should be, tissues in the body will be fragile. This can make ligaments and joints particularly loose and stretchy. As a result, the joints can extend further than usual.

There are other genetic collagen disorders that have hypermobility as a symptom, but hypermobility is also common within the general population and may be a result of normal genetic variation. All other causes of hypermobility will be ruled out before the diagnosis of JHS is given.

## Possible features of JHS

1. Joints that are very mobile (hypermobility).
2. Pain – this may be very specific (i.e. one to two joints) or very general (many joints and/or muscles). It is caused by over stretching of the joints and fatiguing of the muscles.
3. Tiredness – caused by ineffective muscles.
4. Weakness of muscles.
5. Poor balance and co-ordination.
6. Difficulty doing things independently, for example, walking long distances or writing because of weak muscles and pain.
7. Other features can include easy bruising, abdominal pains, headaches, dizziness, constipation, clicking joints and fidgetiness.

Your child may experience some or all of these problems at various times but there is much that can be done to help ease them or remove them altogether.

There is little that can or needs to be done about the joint movement as the main cause is the ineffective use of the muscles controlling the joints.

## The importance of muscles

Muscles main job is either to move or stabilise a joint, allowing a person to move about safely and effectively. Muscles help to control the range of movement as well as produce the force needed to move. This is very important in hypermobility as the muscles tend to be weak and unfit, resulting in them unable to do their job properly.

The main treatment for hypermobility is, therefore, to improve muscle strength and fitness to ensure that the joints are protected at all times.

## Treatment

There is no medication that can help improve hypermobility. However, pain relief and/or anti-inflammatory drugs may help at the beginning of acute problems.

These may assist with pain management but will not change the cause of the symptoms. The most important treatment is your child's exercise programme to be carried out regularly at home. The programme is designed to improve the strength and fitness of each of your child's muscles as well as improve their general fitness. This will ensure that the muscles are protecting the joints during all activities and easing the pain.