

Loose Joints (Joint Hypermobility)

Joints connect the bones in our bodies to help us move. Some joints, such as knees and elbows work like a hinge. They help us bend and straighten. Other joints, like the shoulder and hip, move even more. They help us bend backward, forward, sideways, and even in a circle.

What are loose joints?

Sometimes the joints move more than they should. These joints are loose. A person with loose joints is often said to be “double jointed”. It is common for some people to have 1 or 2 loose joints. If a person has 4 or more loose joints, it could be a sign of other health problems.

Health problems that may be related to 4 or more loose joints

- Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
- Heart problems
- Fainting
- Marfan’s Syndrome
- Fibromyalgia

What are the symptoms?

Not everyone with more loose joints has these health problems. Other symptoms can include:

- Stretchy skin
- Joint pain or dislocating joints
- Bruising easily
- Clumsiness
- Constipation
- Thin skin that cuts easily and takes longer to heal

Some children will not have signs of other health problems. Your medical provider will tell you if your child needs to be checked. It is helpful to see a doctor who sees a lot of children with loose joints to check for other problems.

How are loose joints treated?

Treatment depends if your child has other related health problems.

- Joint pain. Your child may need physical therapy, braces, or pain medicine.
- Some children need to avoid contact sports.
- Constipation. Your child may need to be treated for a long period of time as the muscles that help the colon push poop out may be weak or too flexible.

What else can be done?

- Exercise. Tell your child to stop when their joints start to hurt.
- Do not let your child sit with knees tucked under the body.
- Talk to your child’s doctor about contact sports or activities that can easily cause injuries.
- Tell the doctor if your child or other family members have health problems listed above.

ALERT: Call your child’s doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.