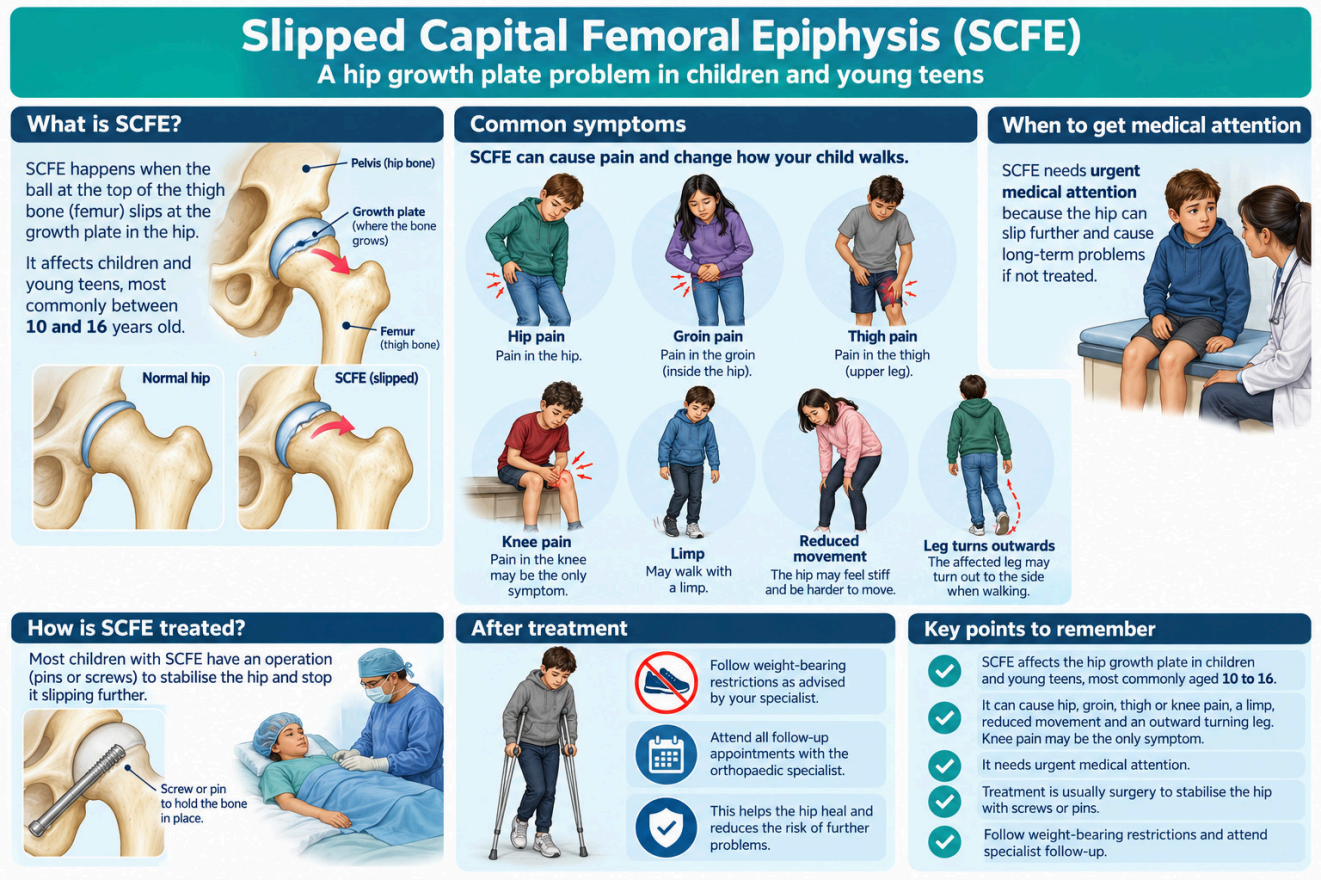
SCFE in Children

Information for children, parents and carers

SCFE in Children

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery



Understanding SCFE

Slipped capital femoral epiphysis (SCFE) affects the growth plate at the top of the thigh bone, where the femoral head slips from its normal position. It most often occurs during rapid growth, commonly between ages 10 and 16.

Important information

SCFE is serious and needs urgent medical attention. Early diagnosis and treatment reduce further slipping and complications. Surgery usually stabilises the hip with screws or pins.

Symptoms and assessment

Understanding the cause and when to seek help

Risk factors

- Rapid growth during puberty
- Being overweight or obesity
- Family history of SCFE
- Rarely, hormonal disorders

Signs and symptoms

- Limping or difficulty walking
- Hip, groin, thigh or knee pain
- Reduced hip movement
- One leg appearing shorter
- Affected leg turning outwards

Sometimes knee pain is the only symptom, without obvious hip pain.

Diagnosis

A clinician checks hip movement and leg alignment. X-rays confirm the slip and show its severity.

Why prompt treatment matters

Untreated SCFE can lead to permanent hip deformity, reduced movement and osteoarthritis in early adulthood. Early diagnosis and treatment significantly reduce these risks.

Key message

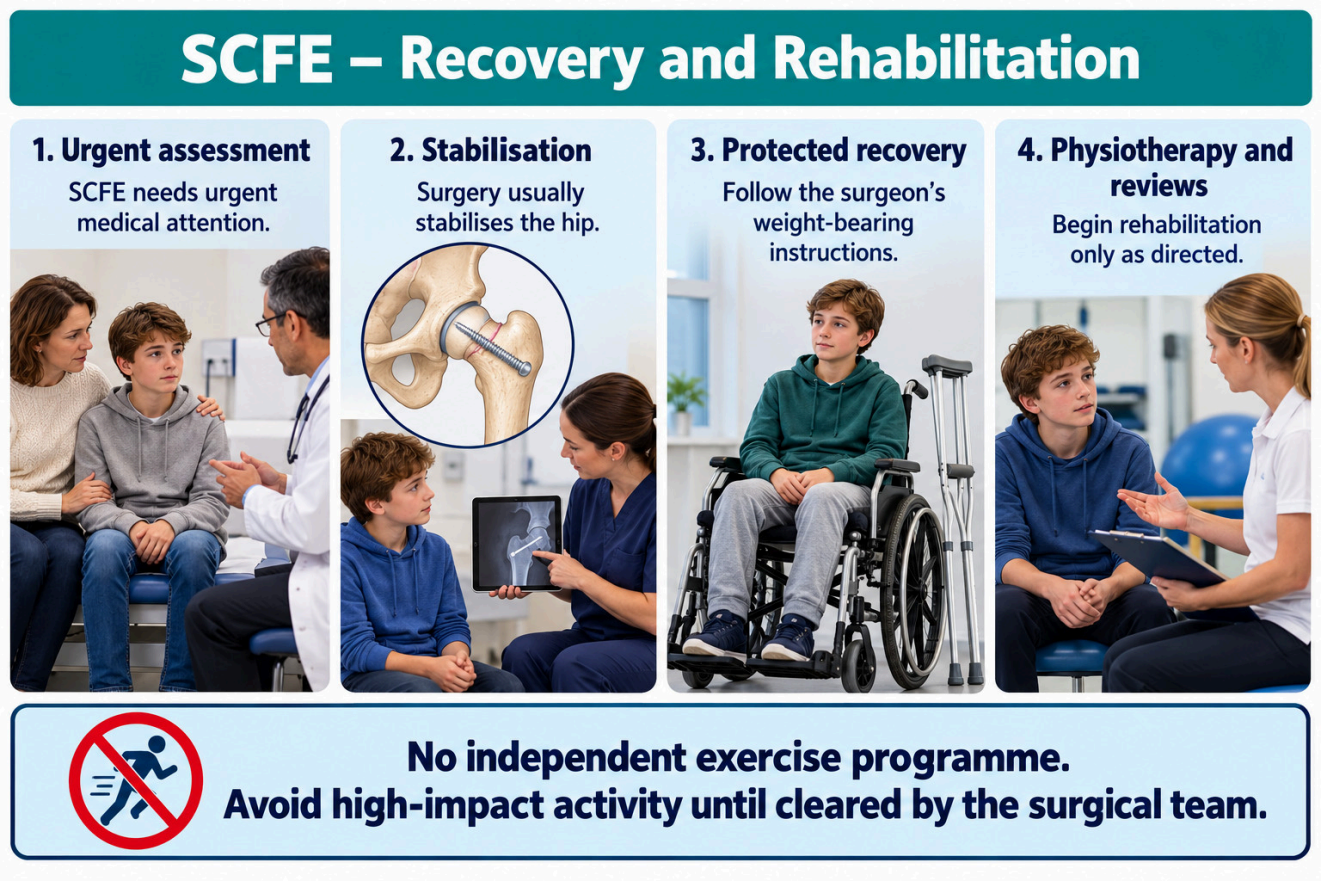
SCFE is serious and needs urgent medical attention. Early diagnosis and treatment reduce further slipping and complications. Surgery usually stabilises the hip with screws or pins.

Recovery and rehabilitation

Activity guided by your child's healthcare team

Before starting activity

This is a specialist recovery pathway, not a home exercise routine. SCFE needs urgent medical care. Begin rehabilitation only when directed by the surgical team.



Recovery guidance

Stabilisation: surgery usually secures the slipped bone with screws or pins.
Protected healing: follow the surgeon's weight-bearing restrictions.
Physiotherapy: restore strength and mobility only as directed.
Follow-up: attend all hip development checks.

Important precautions

Go to the emergency department if your child cannot walk or bear weight, pain suddenly worsens, or there is hip deformity or swelling. Avoid high-impact activity until cleared.

Treatment and next steps

Caring for your child and finding support

Surgery and early recovery

Most children need surgery with screws or pins to stabilise the bone and prevent further slipping. After surgery, weight-bearing is limited until the hip heals. Follow the surgeon's exact instructions.

Home care and support

- Follow the surgeon's and physiotherapist's instructions
- Avoid high-impact activity until fully recovered and cleared
- Manage pain as advised by the healthcare team
- Attend every follow-up appointment

When to seek immediate help

Go to the emergency department if your child cannot walk or bear weight, has sudden worsening pain, or develops signs of hip deformity or swelling.

Recovery outlook

With early diagnosis and treatment, most children recover well and can return to normal activity. Regular follow-up monitors hip development.

Further information

NHS - Slipped Capital Femoral Epiphysis
Physiotherapy advice for children

B-Well Physiotherapy Services
0300 303 4811
bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net
www.bwellberkshire.co.uk