# Snapping Hip in Children

Information for children, parents and carers

## Snapping Hip in Children

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery




### Understanding snapping hip in children

Snapping hip syndrome (coxa saltans) is a snapping sensation or sound at the front, side or back of the hip during movement. It is often painless, but can cause discomfort, stiffness or activity limitations.

### Supporting your child

A physiotherapist can tailor stretches, strengthening and movement advice for your child. Avoid repeatedly triggering painful snapping and build activity gradually.

# Symptoms and assessment

Understanding the cause and when to seek help

## What causes snapping?

- External: tight tendons slide over bone on the outside of the hip
- Internal: tendons or muscles move over the hip joint or pelvis
- Inside the joint: cartilage tears or loose bodies may cause snapping

## Common symptoms

- Snapping or popping during movement
- Discomfort or pain, especially after prolonged activity
- Hip tightness or stiffness
- Weakness or reduced movement

## How is it diagnosed?

The clinician asks about symptoms and observes movements that trigger snapping. X-ray, ultrasound or MRI may be used to rule out other causes.

## When to seek help

Seek advice if pain worsens or does not improve with rest and physiotherapy, or if snapping limits daily activities or sport. Ask your child’s doctor or physiotherapist for a tailored plan.

## Key message

A physiotherapist can tailor stretches, strengthening and movement advice for your child. Avoid repeatedly triggering painful snapping and build activity gradually.

## Physiotherapy support

A tailored programme may combine flexibility, core and hip strength, movement training and balance. Your physiotherapist will choose the exercises and progression for your child.

## Activity reminder

Warm up before activity, use supportive footwear and increase duration or intensity gradually.

# Exercises and rehabilitation

Activity guided by your child's healthcare team

## Before starting activity

The illustrations are examples only. A physiotherapist should choose exercises for your child's symptoms and stage. Avoid painful snapping or forced movement.




## Activity guidance

**Flexibility:** prescribed IT band, hip flexor or piriformis stretches.
**Strength:** core, glute and hip abductor work, such as bridges, leg lifts, clams or planks.
**Function:** progress to step-ups, lunges or squats with correct form.
**Balance:** coordination and stability exercises as advised.

## Important precautions

Use controlled movements and progress gradually. Stop repeating movements that trigger painful snapping and ask your physiotherapist to adapt the programme.

# Treatment and next steps

Caring for your child and finding support

## Activity and lifestyle changes

Reduce repetitive movements that trigger snapping. Support your child with a healthy body weight and suitable activity choices.

## Physiotherapy management

A tailored plan may include IT band stretches (standing or lying), hip flexor lunges or Thomas stretch, and a lying piriformis stretch. Core, glute and hip abductor strength, movement retraining, hip alignment, muscle activation and gradual return to sport may help. Foam rolling or myofascial release may ease tightness.

## Medicines and other options

Pain relief such as ibuprofen may help if suitable for your child; follow age-appropriate advice. A specialist may consider corticosteroid injection for severe pain. Surgery is rare and usually reserved for causes inside the joint such as cartilage damage.

## Self-care

- Warm up before activity and stretch afterwards as advised
- Use supportive footwear
- Increase activity intensity and duration gradually
- Ice or heat packs may help with pain

## Questions or concerns?

Speak to your child's doctor or physiotherapist if pain worsens, fails to settle with rest and physiotherapy, or limits daily life or sport.

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