

Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary

Title: Hip Exams of the Newborn Explained

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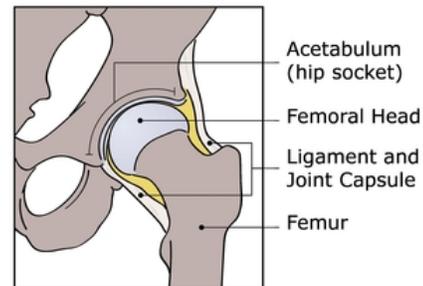
Plain Language Summary:

What is the hip exam looking for?

You may have seen your doctor perform an exam on your baby after birth. One part of this test is where the doctor moves your baby's legs in some strange ways. The doctor is feeling how your child's hips move. This is a screening test to look for a disease that can happen in babies called developmental dysplasia of the hip, or DDH. Screening tests look for possible diseases before problems happen.

What is DDH?

Doctors are not sure what exactly causes DDH. The hip in humans is a ball and socket joint. This means that the femoral head of your leg bone, the ball, fits into the acetabulum of your hip, the socket. DDH occurs when the ball and socket don't fit well together. The normal tight fit of the hip is lost if the shape isn't right. Often there are no signs or symptoms right after birth and your child's hip may look normal. There can still be problems with the hip. The wrong shape can cause the hip to not grow properly as your child gets older.



Who gets DDH?

About 1 in 1000 children gets DDH. Risk factors exist for DDH. These are being female, being first born, having family members with DDH, and being breech at delivery, where the baby's bottom is down. Children can still get DDH even without these risk factors. Doctors check all babies at birth for these and most cases are found very early in life. Treatment can be started early to make sure the hip grows well. DDH can also be found later in life. Different treatments are used if your child is older.

How do doctors know who has DDH?

The physical exam is done for all newborns soon after birth. This is the best test to look for the disease before there are any problems. If the doctor thinks your child might have DDH, the next step is usually an ultrasound to image the hip. This test looks at the inside of the hip just like looking at babies during pregnancy. It does not harm the child in any way and gives a lot of information about your child's hip. You may wonder why this isn't done on all children if it is so helpful. Research has been done by groups of doctors that showed that imaging every child isn't needed in looking for DDH. Usually the physical exam is enough to rule out DDH. This method allows doctors to find DDH early in life. Then they can take the proper steps to treat your child's hip before any problems can happen.

What if I still have more questions?

Developmental dysplasia of the hip: National Institute of Health

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001966/>

Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip: WebMD

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/baby/tc/developmental-dysplasia-of-the-hip-topic-overview>

Key Words:

Developmental dysplasia of the hip

Acetabulum

Ultrasonography

Ortolani and Barlow techniques

Breech presentation

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