

## Two Left Feet?



*“My child is always falling over and hurting themselves”*

**M**any parents express to chiropractors a concern about the shape and development of their children’s legs and especially about poor co-ordination and clumsiness. “My child is always falling over and hurting themselves” is a very commonly heard complaint.

### Limb Development

In the majority of cases, the bowlegged or knock-kneed appearance of a child’s lower limbs is part of the normal pattern of childhood development.

At birth, a child’s legs are very bowed because of the position they have been in while inside the mother. Over the first two years of the child’s life, as they begin to stand and walk, the bowed appearance slowly changes and they appear to be quite knock-kneed by their third birthday. By the time the child is ready to start school, from around age 5, this knock-kneed appearance will have reduced to the normal adult angles and will not be very obvious at all. The fully developed angle between the upper and lower leg measured at the outside of the knee is about 5°.

### Causes

Clumsiness is not always caused by normal development and should be investigated. Clumsiness begins to be very noticeable when the child is between 2 and 3 years of age when the lower leg angle known as the ‘tibiofemoral angle’ goes from being bowed to knock-kneed. Clumsy children may have uneven lower leg angles. It is not uncommon for a clumsy child to have a tibiofemoral angle on one side as high as 15° while on the other side it can be as low as 3°. The normal range for these angles is 5°-7° when the child is 3 years old reducing to 3°-5° by the time the child is around 5 years old and ready for school.

### Other Reasons

This growth pattern is the most common reason why children are clumsy and uncoordinated, but is by no means the only reason.

While there may be a problem at the knee joints themselves, the majority of the time the unevenness is due muscular issues in the lower back.

Unlike adults, children seldom get back pain as a result of problems in their lower back and therefore may not complain of pain.

Any child who appears to be clumsy should be examined to rule out the more serious causes of clumsiness or extreme knock-kneed posture.

The chiropractic treatment of children with clumsiness and poor co-ordination is very gentle and safe and the results are seen usually after one or two adjustments.

*Chiropractic offers a very effective way of correcting uneven lower leg angles which may result in clumsiness.*