

HIP FACTS FROM THE LITERATURE #61

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SLIPPED CAPITAL FEMORAL EPIPHYSIS (SCFE) OCCURS IN FEMALES & YOUNG ATHLETES TOO



In 1 in 3
paediatric patients,
SCFE may be
associated with
athletic activity

DESPITE HIGHEST PREVALENCE IN OVERWEIGHT YOUNG MALES, SCFE ALSO OCCURS IN FEMALES AND IN ASSOCIATION WITH SPORT. DON'T MISS THIS DIAGNOSIS IN YOUNG ATHLETES.

Slipped Capital Femoral Epiphysis (SCFE) is, as it sounds, a slip of the femoral head epiphysis (growth plate). You can see an example in the xray above - right hip (left side of the image). This occurs during rapid growth phases in adolescence, usually soon after the onset of puberty. The highest incidence is in overweight males in the 12-16 year age group, and this has become quite a strong stereotype - that SCFE only occurs in this group.

This paper by Loder and colleagues highlights the fact that SCFE also occurs in females and in association with sport. There may be an incident, but most commonly the presentation is unable to be attributed to a single event. Many children are not diagnosed for weeks or even months, which may impact on outcomes. It's important then to keep an eye out for adolescents presenting with hip, thigh and/or knee pain, with an externally rotated, Trendelenburg or 'waddling gait'. Don't miss this diagnosis in young females and athletes!

Loder RT, Gunderson ZJ, Sun S, Liu RW, Novais EV. Slipped Capital Femoral Epiphysis Associated With Athletic Activity. Sports Health. 2023 May;15(3):422-426.