

“Growing Pains” vs Real Injuries

What Parents and Young
Athletes Need To Know



“Oh, it’s just growing pains!”

Sound familiar? As a parent or coach, you’ve probably heard this phrase when a young athlete complains of aches or soreness.

But here’s the thing: brushing it off as “*just growing pains*” can mean missing something important.

At Peach Physiotherapy & Wellness Centre, we know that paying attention early makes all the difference.

Here’s the truth:

- Most common aches in young athletes aren’t just growing pains.
- They’re often actual injuries that need a proper, evidence-based approach to heal.

We’re here to help you:

- Figure out what’s really going on
- Get them healing the right way
- Keep them healthy and in the game

Growing Pains vs. Real Injuries: A Simple Guide

It's important to know the difference between "growing pains" and actual injuries. Here's a simple way to tell them apart:

Growing Pains

- Usually harmless and mostly at night
- Happens on both sides of the body
- Usually no pain when you press on the area

Real Injuries

- Gets worse with activity
- Usually on just one side
- Tender to the touch on a specific spot

Why Growing Bodies Are Different

Kids and teens aren't just mini adults! During adolescence, their bodies go through big changes that affect how they move, train, and get injured.

Two important things to know:

- Growth = changes in height and weight
- Maturation = the bigger process of developing into adulthood (bones, muscles, hormones)

Because growth and maturation don't always happen at the same rate, kids of the same age can look and move very differently. This can affect when and how injuries happen.

Common Injuries Often Mistaken for “Growing Pains”

Instead of just blaming aches on “growing pains,” a physiotherapist can help pinpoint what’s really going on.

Some common conditions include:

Osgood-Schlatter’s Disease

- Affects the front of the knee
- Involves the patellar tendon attaching to sensitive growth cartilage
- Often linked to knee weakness

Sever’s Disease

- Causes pain at the back of the heel where the Achilles tendon attaches
- Common in younger athletes, usually around 10–12 years old

Patellofemoral Pain (PFP)

- Pain around the kneecap
- Second most common knee complaint in adolescents
- Can continue into adulthood if not treated properly

A Better Way to Recover: The Optimal Loading Approach

Forget the old advice of “just rest”. That’s not the best way for growing athletes to heal!

Today, we know that rehab is really training while injured. Staying active (safely) actually helps the body recover faster.

Instead of sitting out completely, we use optimal loading. That just means keeping your child moving in a way that helps healing, without making things worse. Too much rest can actually slow recovery.

Here’s how it works:

1. Progressive Loading

We help your athlete slowly and safely increase activity and exercise—step by step.

2. The Activity Ladder

A simple way to know what’s okay and what’s not:

- **Green Zone (Go!):** No pain, or just a little that doesn’t get worse and goes away quickly.
- **Red Zone (Stop!):** Pain that’s moderate or severe, gets worse during activity, or sticks around.

The idea is to move your child up the ladder—from walking to slow running to faster running—while staying in the Green Zone. That way, they heal safely, keep their strength, and stay in the game.

Our Approach To Helping Young Athletes

Treating a young athlete isn't just about giving them a few exercises. At Peach Physiotherapy, we get how a growing body works and what it really needs.

HERE'S HOW WE HELP:

Exercise Isn't Just a Mini Adult Program

We start with the basics: bodyweight moves and good movement patterns. And then we add heavier loads as your child grows.

We Focus on Both Skill and Strength

It's not just about how strong your child is. We also look at how well they move, so skill and strength go hand in hand.

We Look at the Whole Picture

We help manage training loads and make sure your child still has plenty of free play—that unstructured time is super important for healthy growth.

Don't let pain keep your child on the sidelines.

The right diagnosis and a smart rehab plan can get them back to full strength—fast and lasting.

**Ready to get your young athlete back in the game?
Contact Peach Physiotherapy now!**