

Let's Talk About...

Meralgia paresthetica: Outer thigh pain and numbness

Meralgia paresthetica (or Bernhardt-Roth syndrome) is burning pain and numbness in the outer thigh. Your child may feel this pain in front of the hip joint, and it generally happens after walking or exercising.

What causes meralgia paresthetica?

Meralgia paresthetica is caused by pressure on the lateral femoral cutaneous nerve. This nerve provides sensation to the skin of the thigh. When the nerve becomes pinched, it makes the skin burn and become numb. Your child may have meralgia paresthetica if they:

- Wear tight clothes or belts
- Put stress on their hips by cycling or running
- Gained weight or are obese
- Have scar tissue in the groin area because of surgery or an injury
- Have nerve injuries because of diabetes
- Injured their hip during a car accident

What are the signs of meralgia paresthetica?

Signs of meralgia paresthetica include:

- Burning pain on the skin of the outer thigh
- Numbness or tingling in the outer thigh

Meralgia paresthetica usually affects only one side of the body.

How is meralgia paresthetica diagnosed?

Your child's healthcare provider will ask about your child's symptoms and how often they feel thigh pain or numbness.



To make sure your child has meralgia paresthetica and rule out other causes, your child's healthcare provider may recommend:

- A CT scan or MRI (detailed images of your child's body) of your child's pelvic and hip area to make sure there are no tumors.
- An anesthetic injection in your child's thigh to see if it relieves symptoms.
- An electromyography (ee-leck-tro-my-OG-graph-ee), or test for nerve and muscle disorders that uses electric discharges.
- A nerve conduction study, where electrodes stimulate nerves in the skin to see if nerves are damaged.

How is meralgia paresthetica treated?

If your child's meralgia paresthetica is not severe, treatments include:

- Wearing looser clothes
- Taking pain medicine like ibuprofen or acetaminophen
- Losing weight (if your child is overweight)

For more severe pain, your child may need:

- Outpatient surgery to decompress the nerve through a small opening in the thigh
- Corticosteroid injections in the thigh to relieve pain and stop swelling

Most children with meralgia paresthetica feel better within a few months.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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