

Caring for your child's irritable joint and/or limp

Children's Emergency Department

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Information for Patients

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Irritable hip (transient synovitis)

Irritable hip is also known as transient synovitis. It is the most common cause of a limp in children. It occurs when the lining of a major joint (such as the hip or the knee) becomes inflamed. The cause is not fully understood, but it can be seen in children who have had a recent viral infection.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain when standing
- Difficulty crawling or walking
- Walking with a limp
- Pain may be in the hip or groin, but it can affect any joint in the body.
- The pain and limp can be worse in the mornings, seem to improve during the day, but get worse again towards bed time due to tiredness.

How is it treated?

It is a mild condition that normally gets better on its own. Pain relief and rest are usually all that is needed. It should start to improve in 3 days.

You can use medicines such as paracetamol or ibuprofen to ease pain and inflammation.

Your child does not need antibiotics as this is not an infection.

Your child does not usually need tests as long as the history and examination confirm the diagnosis of irritable hip.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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Sometimes children may go on to need to tests such as an X-ray or blood tests if they do not start to get better after a few days.

What can I do at home?

- It is important to encourage your child to rest. They will often adopt the position most comfortable for them,
- Your child can go to school or nursery. You will need to tell them that your child needs to rest and not do any physical activities until they have recovered,
- Let your child to slowly increase their activities as pain allows. They should not return to sports or strenuous activities until they are completely better.

Follow-up

You should return to the Emergency Department if your child

- develops a fever
- develops obvious swelling to a joint
- has increasing pain despite giving pain relief, or the pain has moved to another joint
- is not starting to improve within 3 days or not fully recovered in 2 weeks.

Key points:

- Transient synovitis is the most common cause of limp in children
- It is generally a mild complaint which will get better by itself
- If your child is in pain, medicines such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help ease the pain and reduce the inflammation.

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