Irritable Hip in Children

Child Health Information

Irritable hip is the most common cause of hip pain and/or limping in children. It is also known as ‘Transient Synovitis’. It usually gets better by itself after a few days.

The pain and limp are due to inflammation of the lining of the joint and increased fluid inside the joint.

This leaflet explains more about this condition.

What are the symptoms of ‘irritable hip’?

Irritable hip usually causes a limp. Moving and putting weight on the hip may be uncomfortable or painful.

Children may also have a mildly raised temperature and some children may have recently experienced a viral illness such as a cold, a sore throat, or diarrhoea and vomiting.

Children with an irritable hip will get better between about three days to two weeks.

Why does irritable hip happen?

The exact cause is unknown but it often follows a viral infection or a mild episode of trauma.

What is the treatment?

- Irritable hip is short lasting and usually gets better without any major treatment within a week or two.
- Pain relief such as ibuprofen or paracetamol can help recovery.
- Your child should rest (as much as possible) until the symptoms have resolved.
- If the symptoms last longer than two weeks then your child’s doctor may arrange further investigations.
• Your child will usually have a follow-up appointment at the hospital or with your GP to check the symptoms have resolved completely.

What else could it be?

It is important to rule out other causes of a painful joint and limping such as an infection in the bone or joint (osteomyelitis or septic arthritis).

**Examination:** The doctors will examine all the joints, lower spine and abdomen to ensure the pain is coming from the hip joint.

**Blood tests:** Your child may need to have blood tests to look for evidence of infection or other abnormalities.

**Other investigations:** Depending on the symptoms and examination your child may need to have x-rays to check for problems with the bones or an ultrasound to look for fluid in the joint. More complex cases may need an MRI or bone scan.

Once at home when should you seek further medical advice?

• If your child develops a temperature of 38 degrees or more
• If your child’s pain becomes significantly worse
• If your child becomes more unwell in themselves (e.g. not wanting to eat, more sleepy)
• If your child develops any pain, swelling or redness in any other joints
• If your child still has pain and/or a limp after two weeks.

If you are concerned then please seek medical attention from your GP or contact the Children’s Ward so that we can arrange to review your child if needed.

Children’s Ward telephone numbers: 01225 824421 or 824813 (24 hours a day).

Are there long term complications

Irritable hip will get better by itself and will not cause any long term problems with the joints.

Further information

Your GP, hospital doctor, or health visitor will be happy to give further advice.