

Irritable hip

Information for patients, parents and guardians

This factsheet explains what is meant by irritable hip. Irritable hip is a common childhood condition that causes symptoms of hip pain and limping. It can cause pain in the knee or thigh and restricted movement in one of the hip joints. The condition develops when the lining that covers the hip joint (the synovial membrane) becomes irritated and inflamed. It is also known as acute transient synovitis. It is the most common cause of hip pain in young children. This factsheet aims to answer your questions about the condition but if you have any further concerns your child's healthcare team will be happy to discuss them.

The cause

The exact cause is unknown but irritable hip often follows a viral infection or an episode of minor trauma such as a bump, knock, or fall.

Symptoms

Your child will complain of pain in their hip or knee. They will find moving and putting weight on their hip uncomfortable. They may also limp.

What investigations are needed?

To make sure your child receives the correct treatment other possible causes for the hip pain need to be excluded (ruled out). This is because irritable hip shares the symptoms of more serious hip conditions, such as septic arthritis (an infection inside the hip) or Perthes disease.

Investigations and tests your child may have:

X-rays to exclude (rule out) abnormality in the bone.

Blood tests to look for evidence of bone or joint infection.

Physical examination to check the range of movement in the hip to determine the seriousness of the condition.

Bone scan or MRI (magnetic resonance imaging, a type of scan that uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves to produce detailed images of the inside of the body) may be used if your child's condition does not improve. The procedure will be explained if it's appropriate for your child.

What is the treatment?

Irritable hip is a short-lived condition that usually gets better without any major treatment. Sometimes your child may need a short stay in hospital to rest the hip joint. This could be bed rest (a stay in bed to aid recovery) or simple skin traction (bandages and weights). This helps to reduce the pain by resting the hip joint. Bed rest is sometimes needed for a few days, and simple pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen can also help. Always follow the instructions on the packet.

Going home

Your child can go home when:

- they have a pain-free range of hip movement
- their blood test results are within normal limits
- their x-rays are normal
- they are able to walk without pain

Care at home

Your child may limp occasionally or complain of pain in the first week at home but will soon return to normal.

Steps to help your child's recovery:

- simple pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen may be given
- allow your child to gradually return to their usual activities
- swimming is an excellent way to reintroduce mobility in the hip joint

Follow-up

Your child may be seen for an outpatient appointment. This will be within six weeks. This is to check their progress since going home from hospital. An x-ray may be needed at this appointment. A small number of children have a further episode of hip pain. If this happens you will need to make an appointment to see your child's GP. In some cases there may be a need to return to hospital.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

The nurse practitioners office: **023 8120 4991** or mobile: **07584 402438** (please leave a message)

Ward G3: **023 8120 6486**

Your child's GP

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

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