University Hospitals Dorset
NHS Foundation Trust

Irritable hip

Emergency department Patient Information

What is irritable hip?

Irritable hip is also known as transient synovitis. It is inflammation of the lining of the hip joint.

The exact cause is unknown, although the problem often follows a viral infection or an episode of trauma.

It is a very common condition that is usually seen in toddlers and children up until about the age of nine, but it can also be seen in older children.

What are the symptoms of irritable hip?

Irritable hip may cause your child to limp on the affected side. It may also be uncomfortable to move or put weight through the hip and they may not want to walk at all.

Is it serious?

Irritable hip is not serious in most cases and usually settles down by itself any time between three days and two weeks.

It does not leave you with any long-term problems, but sometimes children who have had irritable hip before may get it again.

How is it treated?

Usually no tests are required for this condition. Treatment is complete rest, which can be tricky in an active child!

Your child should not go to their day care or school until it is completely better. They should not play sport, or do strenuous activity, until it is completely better.

Give your child regular paracetamol and ibuprofen to help with their pain. Antibiotics are not recommended for this condition.

When should I bring my child back to the Emergency Department?

- If you have seen no improvement in their symptoms in 3 days despite rest and regular paracetamol and ibuprofen
- they develop a high temperature
- they are unwell in themselves - for example, not eating or drinking, vomiting, lethargic
- they develop a skin rash, a swollen or red joint
- their pain becomes much worse, or is waking them up at night
- they develop pain, redness, or swelling of other joints
- they are still limping after two weeks.

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