

Follow up care

If your child is no better, please attend any follow-up appointments recommended by your doctor or nurse. You can always ring to cancel the appointment if your child is completely back to normal.

As long as your child starts to improve by 3 days and can move normally within 2 weeks, there will probably be no need for further investigations or treatments. Physiotherapy is not usually needed.

Arrange for your child to see their GP if the pain happens again.

Further Information

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/hip-pain-children-irritable-hip/
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/septic-arthritis/
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-dysplasia-of-the-hip/

Useful numbers

Practice Plus (Brighton walk-in centre / GP service) 0333 321 0946
Open every day from 8am to 8pm, including bank holidays.
www.practiceplusbrightonstation.nhs.uk

For out of hours GP service or advice ring NHS 111

Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital
01273 696955 Ext. 2593
Children's Emergency Department

Please be aware that CED staff will not be able to give you medical advice over the telephone.



Produced by the Department of Paediatric Surgery & Urology and the Children's Emergency Department.
Authors: Rowena Jay, Miki Lazner.
Ref number: 1016
Publication date: November 2019. Review date: November 2021



© Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust
Disclaimer: The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

the alex

Limping in children

Children's Emergency Department

Your child has been seen in our Children's Emergency Department (CED) because they have developed a limp.

We have assessed them and have diagnosed them with an 'irritable hip' or another condition which will get better on its own with simple pain medicine.

Why is my child limping?

There are many causes of limping in children. Most of them are not serious and will get better by themselves.

'Irritable hip' (also called Transient synovitis), is the most common cause of limping in children. This is when the lining of the hip joint is inflamed. It is most often seen in children between 3 and 10 years old. It can happen after a virus or injury or sometimes for no apparent reason.

Your child may complain of pain in the hip, groin, thigh or knee. They may have difficulty walking or crawling. Usually only one side is affected.

Although worrying for you, it is not a serious condition and will get better after one or two weeks.

There are some other more serious causes of a limp which do need hospital treatment. The doctor or nurse practitioner that you have seen will have considered that these are very unlikely after listening to your child's story and examining them.

Sometimes your child may need blood tests and/or an x-ray to help decide.

How can I look after my child at home?

Rest

It is important to encourage your child to rest at home. They will naturally sit, crawl, walk or lie in the most comfortable position.

You may wish to keep your child off school or nursery until they have started to improve. You can allow them to slowly go back to their usual activities. They should not play sport or do any energetic activities until they are completely better. Swimming is a good way to get the hip joint moving comfortably again.

Your child's pain and ability to move should start to improve in about three days and be completely better in two weeks.

Medicines

Anti-inflammatory pain medicines such as ibuprofen (Nurofen, Calprofen), are helpful as they relieve the pain as well as reducing inflammation. Follow the dosage instructions on the medicine bottle. Paracetamol (Calpol) may also help with pain.

Antibiotics are not given for irritable hip.

Watching your child: what are the warning signs to look out for?

If your child has **any** of the following, please return to the CED the same day:

- A temperature of more than 38°C
- Becomes unwell
- Refuses to put weight at all on the affected leg
- Pain that gets worse or pain that doesn't stop even when resting
- A red, hot or swollen joint
- Bruising without an injury

These symptoms may mean there is a more serious problem such as a bone or joint infection which may need hospital treatment.