



Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Limping Child

**Information for  
parents and carers**



Limping in children can be caused by a variety of factors, ranging from minor injuries to more serious medical conditions. This leaflet aims to help you understand the common causes of limping in children and when to seek medical attention.

## Causes of limping

A condition called transient synovitis (sometimes known as irritable hip) is the most common cause of hip pain in children. This is where the hip joint becomes sore and inflamed.

Transient synovitis can be painful, but it's not usually serious and should get better by itself.

**However hip pain should always be checked because it could be a sign of something serious.**

### **Other possible causes of hip pain in children include:**

- An infected hip joint (septic arthritis) or bone infection (osteomyelitis).
- An injury like a broken bone.
- A problem with the hip bones and blood supply to the hip joint (Perthes' disease).
- Muscle or ligament strain.
- Growing pains.

Transient synovitis and septic arthritis have similar early symptoms with spontaneous onset of:

- Progressive hip, groin, or thigh pain.
- Limp or inability to bear weight.
- Fever.
- Irritability.

### **What else could it be?**

You are being given this leaflet as we think your child has irritable hip. It is important to consider other causes of a painful joint such as infection of a bone or joint (septic arthritis or osteomyelitis). Sometimes it may be necessary to do blood tests and other investigations such as an X-ray or ultrasound to confirm the diagnosis.

## Treatment for transient synovitis

Transient synovitis usually gets better in a few days and does not cause lasting problems.

Once your child has been diagnosed with transient synovitis, you can usually look after them at home.

### Do

- Make sure they rest their leg until they're feeling better – keep them off nursery or school until they're improving.
- Give them children's ibuprofen or children's paracetamol for their pain.

### Don't

- Do not let them do any activities that could put a lot of strain on their hip for at least 2 weeks – they can gradually return to their normal activities once they're feeling better (swimming is a good way to get the joint moving again).

### When to seek further medical attention:

- If your child develops a fever of 38 degrees or more.
- If your child's pain becomes significantly worse or went away and has come back.
- If your child is unable to weight bear.
- 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 of any other joints.
- If your child still has pain and/or a limp after 2 weeks.

# Limping child open access to CDU

Your child (name) ..... has a limp that we expect to resolve in the next two weeks.

Until (date, 2 weeks in future) ..... you can phone our **CDU department directly on 01865 223 028** for advice about limp, leg pain or fever.

The open access number for the **Horton is 07717 451 552**.

## Please call us if:

- Your child is still limping after two weeks, or
- Your child has fever higher than 38 degrees at any point whilst still limping, or
- Your child has significant worsening of the limp, or lots more pain.

If your concern is unrelated to fever, pain or limping, please see your GP for medical advice.

After ..... (date, 2 weeks in future) please see your GP if you need any medical advice.

## References

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/limp-in-children](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/limp-in-children)

# Notes



## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



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