

# Limping Child

Information for parents



leeds children's  
hospital

caring about children

## Why is my child limping?

Most children who are limping with no injury will have an 'irritable hip' (see below) or another condition which does not need tests to diagnose. These will get better on their own without hospital treatment.

There are some other more serious causes of a limp such as joint or bone infection which do need hospital treatment. The clinician who has assessed your child will have ruled out these more serious causes by taking a history and examining your child carefully.

## What is an irritable hip?

Irritable hip (or transient synovitis) is the common cause of limp in childhood. It is due to inflammation (not infection) of the hip joint. The exact cause is not known but it often happens after a viral illness or an injury. Your child may complain of pain in the hip, groin, thigh or knee and may have difficulty walking or crawling. Usually only one side is affected. It is generally a mild condition which gets better on its own after 1 or 2 weeks.

## Does my child need to be seen again?

Your child will be reviewed in the Paediatric Emergency department review clinic usually within 48-72 hours of your initial attendance.

Your follow up appointment is on

Date: ..... Time: .....

in the Paediatric Emergency Department, Jubilee Wing,  
Leeds General Infirmary, Great George Street, LS1 3EX.

During this time please contact the Emergency Department immediately, on **0113 39 25548** or **0113 39 25549** if your child:

- becomes unwell
- develops a high temperature
- is unable to put any weight at all on the affected leg

These are symptoms that may indicate a more serious problem.

### **What can I do to help my child at home?**

You should encourage your child to rest the affected leg as much as possible over the next few days. This may mean that your child does not attend school or nursery until the clinic appointment.

Children should be given regular pain relief, and ideally regular Ibuprofen, which can be given every 6-8 hours (no more than three times in 24 hours). If your child is not able to take Ibuprofen due to other health problems or allergies then Paracetamol can be used. Always follow the dose prescribed or detailed on the medication.

Most children will show some improvement over the next few days.

### **What will happen at the review clinic appointment?**

This appointment gives us a chance to check on your child's progress. We would expect most children to be getting better at this time. Your child will be seen and examined by a senior Emergency Department Clinician.

If your child is well and the limp/pain is improving, your child will be discharged from the clinic.

If your child is unwell, not improved at all or is worse, then the clinician may arrange further investigations eg blood tests, x-rays or an ultrasound scan. Your child may then be referred to another team.

If you have a problem on the day or need to rearrange an appointment please contact the Emergency Department reception on **0113 39 22512**

## When can I expect my child to be back to normal?

You can allow your child to gradually go back to their usual activities as they improve, but we would advise that they do not do sport or strenuous activity for two weeks. Your child may still need pain relief medicine. Gradually reduce the number of times you give it in a day as they get better.

We would expect your child to be back to normal within 1-2 weeks.

**Please contact the Emergency Department if your child unexpectedly becomes worse in this time.**

If your child is not completely better in two weeks it is important that they see their General Practitioner (GP). The GP will discuss with you whether it may be necessary to refer your child to a specialist doctor who deals with children's bones and joints. It may be helpful to take a copy of this leaflet with you.

## Contact details

Childrens A&E: **0113 39 25548** or **0113 39 25549**