

# Limping Child

## Patient information

This leaflet gives you general information about the management of children who are limping. Having assessed your child we feel that it is safe for you to go home.

### Why is my child limping?

We see many children because they have developed a limp (and/or pain somewhere in the affected leg). Most of these children will have an 'irritable hip' (see below) or another condition which does not usually need tests to diagnose it. These conditions 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 Doctor will have ruled out these more serious causes by taking a history and examining your child carefully. Sometimes, an x-ray or blood tests will have been taken.

### What is an Irritable Hip?

Irritable hip (or transient synovitis) is the commonest 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 one or two weeks.

### Does my child need to be seen again?

We would like to see your child within 2-3 days to make sure everything is settling. If your child is unwell or not improving the doctor may request some tests (x-rays or blood tests) and involve some other teams in the hospital. If your child is improving they will be discharged.

### When to seek urgent medical advice

**Return to A&E immediately (before your review date) if your child:**

- becomes unwell
- develops a high temperature
- has more pain
- is unable to walk on their bad leg

**These are symptoms which 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. They may be too sore to attend school or nursery.
- Give regular pain relief medicine such as ibuprofen and paracetamol if required.
- Your child can go back to normal activities as they improve but should try to avoid sport or strenuous activity for 2 weeks.

**If your child is not completely better after 2 weeks, you should take your child to see the GP and take this leaflet with you. Referral to a paediatric specialist might be necessary.**

## Further Information

For further advice and information about your condition:

Please choose from the following:

- 'NHS Patient Choices' website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- 'Making Lives Better' patient website: [www.patient.info](http://www.patient.info)
- Telephone NHS 111
- Contact your General Practitioner

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### Contact details:

- The James Cook University Hospital: 01642 850850  
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Version 1, Issue Date: October 2018, Revision Date: October 2020