

# ***Transient Synovitis***

***(and Limp Clinic)***

***Information for  
children, parents and carers***



**Emergency Department  
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital**



### ***What has happened?***

Your child has been seen in the Emergency Department with a limp due to pain in their hip.

Your child has been diagnosed with a condition called “transient synovitis” that is also known as “irritable hip”. We usually diagnose this condition by examining your child without needing to do extra investigations. Most children will recover with simple pain relief and rest.

When examining your child, we did not find any features of a more serious underlying cause.

### ***What is transient synovitis?***

Transient synovitis (irritable hip) is the most common cause of limping in children between the ages of 2 and 12 years, and is twice as frequent in boys.

About 3 in every hundred children will have transient synovitis at least once, and some children can get it again.

### ***What are the symptoms?***

The symptoms are due to inflammation (swelling) of the lining of the hip joint. This causes a release of fluid into the joint, and leads to pain and restricted movement.

This results in a limp, or sometimes the child does not want to put weight on their affected leg at all. Some children seem quite comfortable despite not wanting to walk or crawl.

Some children with pain from their hip can feel it more in their knee, thigh or groin. Smaller children will naturally sit, crawl or lie in the most comfortable position.

Generally children with transient synovitis are quite well in themselves.

### ***What are the causes of transient synovitis?***

The cause is not clear, although some children will have had a viral infection, such as a cold or sore throat, in the previous week or so.

### ***Is transient synovitis serious?***

Transient synovitis is usually a mild condition that will get better on its own with complete rest and regular pain relief such as ibuprofen or paracetamol.

The symptoms usually resolve within two weeks without complications.

### ***Does my child need any tests?***

Most children don't need tests to identify transient synovitis. Hospital staff will make this diagnosis based on examining your child and the description of their symptoms.

**This leaflet is also available in large print.  
Other formats and languages can be  
supplied on request. Please call Quality  
Development on 01224 554149 for a copy.  
Ask for leaflet 2142.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet.  
If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please  
call 01224 554149 to let us know.

Dr John Ajisafe & Dr Jamie Cooper  
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital  
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### ***What happens during recovery and long-term?***

Usually your child will return to full mobility within 2 weeks of the start of their symptoms. Remember to encourage your child to rest until their symptoms have resolved.

Your child can gradually go back to their usual activities as they improve, but we advise they do not do sport or strenuous activity until fully recovered. Your child may still need pain relief medicine as they begin to increase their levels of activity.

### ***Will you need to see us again?***

Once we have discharged your child from the Limp Clinic, we will not plan to see your child again.

If your child has been discharged from the Limp Clinic but is still limping after one month, please make an appointment with your general practitioner for review.

### ***Contact number***

If you have any concerns or if your child still has significant pain after 4 weeks, contact us on the number below. We'll arrange an appointment to review their progress.

**Emergency Department  
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital  
Westburn Road  
Aberdeen AB25 2ZG**

**☎ 01224 552041**

Occasionally, the doctor will perform some blood tests or an X-ray or a scan at your child's first attendance before making a diagnosis of transient synovitis, but this is not normally needed.

### ***What should I look out for?***

While your child has been diagnosed with transient synovitis, a very small number of children with a limp may go on to develop symptoms and signs of a more serious condition.

**If your child develops any of the below:**

- 1. Pain in the hip or leg that is waking them at night despite oral pain relief.**
- 2. Increasing pain, especially at rest (lying down and not moving) or mobility is getting significantly worse.**
- 3. A fever more than 38°C or is otherwise generally unwell.**
- 4. An obvious swelling on any part of the hip or leg.**

**Please seek urgent medical advice or bring your child directly back to the Emergency Department as soon as possible.**

### ***What will happen now?***

Depending on the results of your assessment in the Emergency Department, we will give you an appointment to return in 5 to 7 days to have a reassessment at the Limp Clinic.

If your child is entirely well and has no ongoing symptoms at the time of the Limp Clinic appointment, you can call the Emergency Department reception and cancel your appointment.

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

Encourage your child to rest. This may be difficult, especially with small children, but please do try your best to avoid walks, play parks etc. This may mean that your child does not attend school or nursery until their clinic appointment.

Give regular pain relief such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen. Paracetamol can be given every 4 to 6 hours (no more than 4 times in 24 hours). Ibuprofen can be given every 6 to 8 hours (no more than 3 times in 24 hours). Do not exceed the prescribed dose on the bottle. Most children will show some improvement over the next few days.

### ***What happens at the Limp Clinic?***

Your child will be reassessed by a senior member of clinical staff in the Emergency Department.

If your child is clearly getting better and the picture is consistent with a resolving transient synovitis then we usually discharge them from our care. We will advise you to continue with rest and pain relief and to return to the department if you have any concerns.

If there is concern that your child may not be improving as we would like, the doctor may perform investigations such as blood tests, X-rays or an ultrasound scan to rule out other causes.

A small number of children may need further follow up or a specialist referral.

### ***Limp Clinic Appointment***

Please attend the Emergency Department in Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital at the following date and time:

Date: .....

Time: .....