



## Emergency Department Advice Sheet – Limping Child

### Why is my child limping?

We see many children who have been brought to the Emergency Department 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 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 Emergency Department Doctor will have ruled out these more serious causes by taking a history and examining your child carefully. Occasionally an x-ray 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?

Yes, you should make an appointment for your child to be seen again within 48-72 hours in the Emergency Department Clinic. **During that time please contact the Emergency Department immediately if your child:**

- **becomes unwell**
- **develops a high temperature**
- **has increasing pain**
- **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.

Give regular pain relief medicine such as Ibuprofen and Paracetamol if required. Ibuprofen can be given every 6-8 hours (no more than 3 times in 24 hours) Paracetamol can be given every 4-6 hours (no more than 4 times in 24 hours). Do not exceed the prescribed dose.

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

## **What will happen at the 48-72 hour 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 Doctor.

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 Doctor may arrange further investigations e.g. blood tests, X-Rays or an ultrasound scan. Your child may then be referred to another team.

## **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 2 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 2 weeks it is important that they see their General Practitioner (GP). Their 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.

## **Friends and Family Test**

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question

– *How likely are you to recommend our A&E Department to family and friends if they needed similar care or treatment?*

This can be completed online at <http://surveys.this.nhs.uk> using tag name chftae or by completing the form available within the department.