

TRANSIENT SYNOVITIS

Transient synovitis (sin-oh-vie-tis), is swelling and irritation of the synovium (sin-oh-vee-um) which is the inner lining of a joint. It most commonly affects the hip joint, in which case it is also called “irritable hip”. It mostly affects children up to 10 years of age. Boys tend to get it more often than girls.

The good news is that transient synovitis is a mild condition that usually gets better on its own within one to two weeks.

What causes it?

The exact cause is not known but about half the time it affects children after a common cold, infection in the bowels or other viral illness, like an ear infection.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Limp
- Problems crawling or standing
- Pain in the affected joint
- Refusal to walk, without explaining why

Are there any tests for it?

Your doctor will ask you many questions about your child’s symptoms and do a thorough physical exam. Usually no other tests are needed.

How do you treat it?

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) for the pain. Be sure to follow the directions on the label.
- **Never** give aspirin (ASA) to your child.
- Complete rest at home – limit any activities that put weight on your child’s hip.
- Gradual return to normal activities after your child’s pain goes away.

When should I call my doctor?

Watch closely for any changes in your child’s health. Call your doctor if:

- Your child does not start to improve within three days or is not completely better in two weeks.
- Your child’s joint pain gets worse.
- Your child has a fever of 38°C or higher.

Even after your child is better, transient synovitis can return. If you notice your child’s symptoms return, be sure to see your doctor.

Sources: 1) MyHealthAlberta.ca. Transient Synovitis in Children: Care Instructions. 2017 <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/aftercareinformation/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=ad1767>; **2)** The Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne. Transient synovitis (irritable hip). 2018 https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Transient_synovitis/

© **The Foundation for Medical Practice Education, www.fmpe.org**

February 2020

