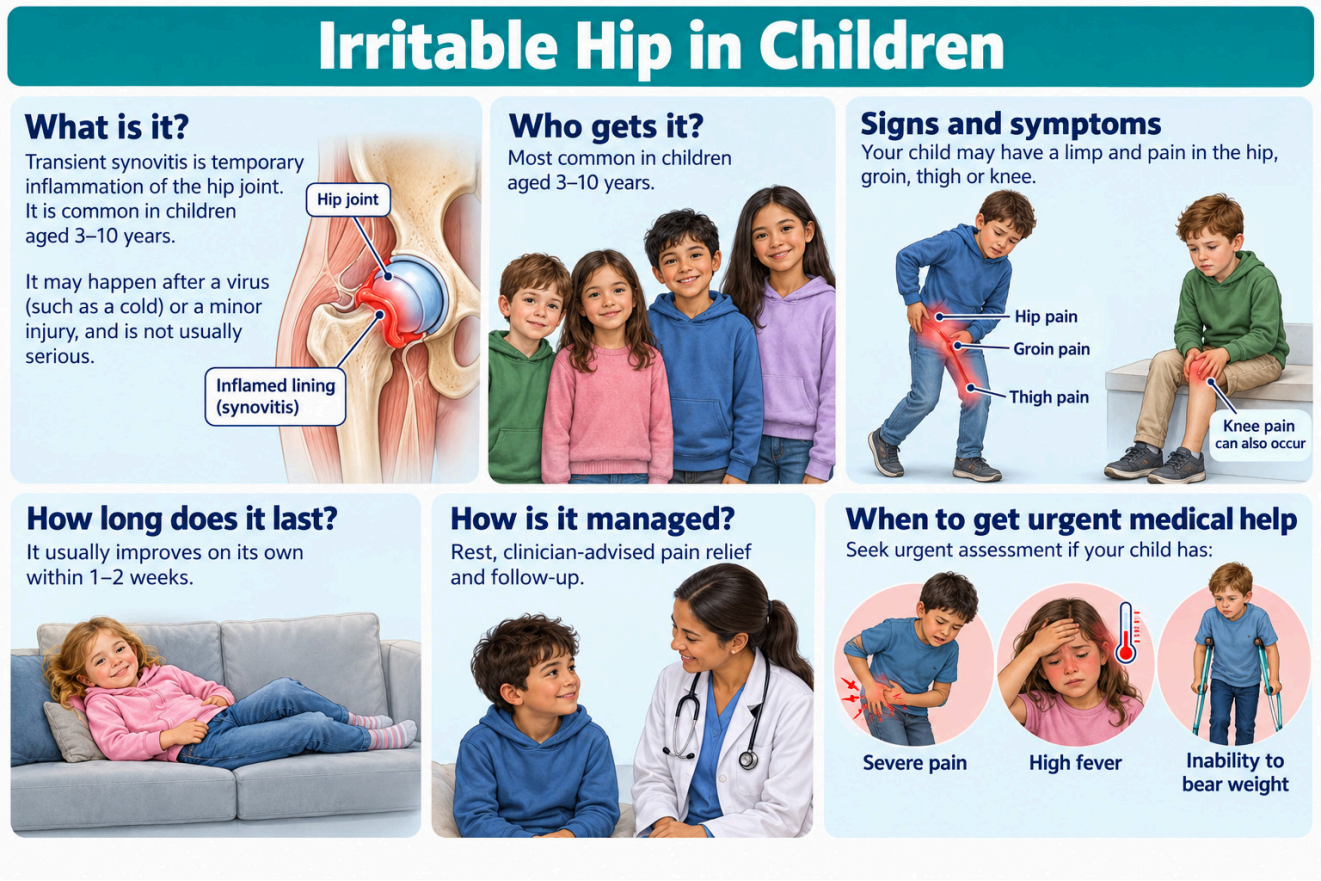
Irritable Hip in Children

Information for children, parents and carers

Irritable Hip in Children

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery



Understanding irritable hip in children

An irritable hip, or transient synovitis, is temporary inflammation of the hip joint. It causes hip pain and difficulty walking, most commonly between ages 3 and 10. After assessment, most children improve within 1-2 weeks.

Supporting your child

Rest from strenuous activity, gentle walking as tolerated and follow-up support recovery. Severe pain, high fever or inability to bear weight needs urgent assessment to exclude a more serious cause.

Symptoms and assessment

Understanding the cause and when to seek help

Possible causes

The exact cause is not always known. Irritable hip often follows a viral infection such as a cold, flu or gastroenteritis, or a minor hip injury.

Signs and symptoms

- Limping or refusing to walk
- Hip, groin, thigh or knee pain
- Reduced hip movement
- Occasionally a mild fever

Assessment and diagnosis

A clinician examines hip pain, swelling and movement. Blood tests or X-rays may be requested to rule out infection, fracture or other conditions.

Seek immediate medical advice

- Cannot bear weight on the leg
- High fever or looks unwell
- Severe hip or knee pain
- Swelling or redness around the hip

Severe symptoms can indicate infection, fracture or another serious cause.

Key message

Rest from strenuous activity, gentle walking as tolerated and follow-up support recovery. Severe pain, high fever or inability to bear weight needs urgent assessment to exclude a more serious cause.

Recovery and rehabilitation

Activity guided by your child's healthcare team

Before starting activity

Once your child has been assessed, follow the clinician's activity advice. This page shows recovery steps rather than a fixed strengthening routine.



Activity guidance

Rest: limit strenuous activity for a few days.
Walking: encourage gentle walking as tolerated.
Play: avoid running or jumping until the pain resolves.
Monitor: keep track of temperature and mobility.

Important precautions

Seek urgent advice if your child cannot bear weight, has high fever, looks unwell, has severe pain or develops swelling or redness around the hip.

Treatment and next steps

Caring for your child and finding support

Treatment and follow-up

Most cases improve without surgery. Rest from strenuous activity for a few days. Paracetamol or ibuprofen may be used as advised. Your doctor may review the hip to check it is improving.

Caring for your child

- Encourage gentle walking only as tolerated
- Avoid running or jumping until pain resolves
- Monitor temperature and mobility
- Keep follow-up appointments

Important warning signs

Get urgent medical advice for inability to bear weight, high fever or appearing unwell, severe hip or knee pain, or redness or swelling around the hip.

Recovery outlook

Most children recover fully within 7-14 days, with no long-term problems. The condition can occasionally recur. Attend any review advised by your doctor.

Further information

NHS - Limping Child / Irritable Hip
Physiotherapy advice for children

B-Well Physiotherapy Services
0300 303 4811
bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net
www.bwellberkshire.co.uk