

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Transient Synovitis in Children

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

This is for all of you parents and grandparents out there who have small children in the family. Up to age five, let's say. The rest of you who are not connected to small children of this age can take a week off (if you want to!).

Synovitis

It is the term which describes a condition in which the hip membrane that lines the hip becomes inflamed and produces too much fluid. It is technically a type of inflammatory arthritis.

Cause

Basically unknown. Mild trauma to a tender little ball and socket is one theory. Another one is viral infection, but we really can't be sure of that. Boys are affected three times as often as girls.

Onset

Typically the child is fine. Then wakes up from a nap or in the morning and starts limping or won't put any weight on the foot. Sometimes it is very hard to localize that the pain is actually coming from the hip.

Exam

When I examine the hip there is always decreased movement. This causes pain in the groin or thigh if the child will tell me where they hurt. Some children deny pain, but the limp is obvious. Most kids have no fever. They usually don't look very sick.

What Else Could It Be?

- Bacterial hip infection
- Perthes Disease
- Rheumatic fever

How I Diagnose It

- Take the temperature
- Carefully examine the leg and hip
- X-ray of the hip
- Lab studies (blood)

Treatment

If there is the slightest suspicion this could be a bacterial infection, I would arrange hospitalization and aspirate the hip joint and begin antibiotics.

If the hip joint culture is normal and no bacteria are found you can breathe easier as it is not from infection.

I sometimes use traction on the painful leg.

Outcome

The symptoms usually clear up in a few days. The child may continue to limp though for several more days.

If no fever is present we continue to watch things carefully for any changes. Eventually the child will begin to put weight on the foot and walk normally.

Trying to decide if it is more serious than transient synovitis is tricky. You should not try to figure this out on your own. If a mistake is made the hip can be destroyed by infection. Seek help!

Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive and Office Website

What if there was a whole world of musculoskeletal information at one place? There is!

www.orthopodsurgeon.com opens up for you the office website, Your Orthopaedic Connection and the Archive of all previous Argus articles I have written for you, your family and friends.

Please check it out. Do yourself a favor.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush