

## Toxic Synovitis

**Alternative names**  
synovitis - toxic

**Definition**

A condition affecting children; which causes hip pain and limping.

**Causes, incidence, and risk factors**

Toxic synovitis is a frequent cause of limping with hip pain in children. It occurs in children prior to the onset of puberty and is a transient arthritis of the hip which usually resolves spontaneously. Its cause is not known but males are affected more frequently than females (approximately 4 to 1).

Symptoms are usually mild and generally include hip pain and a slight limp. The hip pain only involves one side (unilateral). A very low grade fever (less than 101 degrees) may be present as an early symptom but rapidly disappears. Aside from the hip discomfort the child does not appear ill and would rather be playing.

**Prevention**

There is no known prevention.

**Symptoms**

- hip pain (on one side only)
- limp
- thigh pain, in front and toward the middle (may be present)
- knee pain (may be present)
- low grade fever, less than 101 degrees Fahrenheit (may be present)
- child does not appear ill

**Signs and Tests**

- Ultrasound of the hip shows presence of joint effusion
- X-ray of the hip (expect to see a NORMAL appearing hip film)
- ESR may be slightly elevated

Other test rarely done to rule out other causes of hip pain

- aspiration of fluid from the hip joint
- bone scan

**Treatment**

Treatment often includes decreased activity, and occasionally bedrest for a few days may be recommended. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS) may be given to reduce pain and speed healing.

**Expectations (prognosis)**

The hip pain resolves within a week to 10 days.

**Complications**

Legg-Calve-Perthes disease may develop in a small percentage of children who have toxic synovitis.

**Calling your health care provider**

Call for an appointment with your health care provider if your child has unexplained hip pain and a limp with or without associated fever.

If your child has a diagnosis of toxic synovitis you should call if the hip pain persists longer than 10 days.