

Osteomyelitis (bone infection)

What is osteomyelitis?

Osteomyelitis is an infection of your child's bone. It may happen from a wound or from germs (like bacteria or fungus) that enter the bloodstream. If your child does not get treatment, osteomyelitis can cause:

- Permanent damage to the bone.
- Septic arthritis (a type of infection in the joint).
- Weak bones that break easily.
- Bones that will not grow as they should.

What are the causes?

Osteomyelitis is caused by bacteria, or sometimes fungus. Germs most often enter the body through brushing teeth, a deep cut, trauma or broken bone that goes through the skin, or any infected area, such as:

- Blood
- Muscles
- Pressure sores
- Past surgeries

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have 1 or more of these:

- Bone or joint pain
- Chills or fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher)
- Feels very tired or acts irritable
- Nausea (stomach upset)
- Will not put weight on or move the affected body part
- Swelling or redness of the affected area

How can I help prevent the spread of infection?

Germs can spread to others who have direct contact with your child. To help prevent the spread:

- Clean your hands. Hand hygiene is the most important thing you can do to help prevent the spread of germs. Teach your children to do these things, too. You may use:
 - Soap and water to wash your hands well for at least 20 seconds. Rinse and dry them well, too.
 - An alcohol-based gel or foam if you do not see dirt on your hands.
- Your child may be on “Contact Isolation.” This means your child's care team may wear gowns and gloves while taking care of your child.
- Your child may need to stay in their room.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Osteomyelitis (bone infection), continued

What tests could my child have?

Your child may have 1 or more of these:

- Blood tests
- X-ray
- Bone scan
- MRI

What is the treatment?

Some treatment guidelines include:

- Intravenous (I.V.) antibiotics for 4 to 6 weeks or more.
- Surgical debridement. This is a way to clean the wound, remove dead tissue and drain pus from the infected bone.
- Wound V.A.C. (vacuum-assisted closure) treatment
- Joint aspiration. This is a way to draw out fluid to decrease swelling.

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor or take your child to the nearest emergency department (ED) **right away** if your child has any of these:

- A fever of 101.5°F or higher
- Chills
- Feels more tired
- Feels worse than when they were last seen by the doctor
- The area over your child's bone is redder or swollen
- A new wound or one that is getting bigger
- New or increased drainage from a wound that was already there
- More pain around the bone where the infection is
- Can no longer put weight on a leg or foot or use their arm or hand

Does my child need follow-up care?

If your child was seen by an orthopedic (bone) doctor, you may need to schedule a visit as advised by the doctor.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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