

# SEPTIC ARTHRITIS



## 1. What is it?

Septic arthritis is an infection within the joint and is classed as a medical emergency. Delayed or inadequate treatment can lead to irreversible joint destruction and fatality is generally around 11%.



## 2. Clinical symptoms

- 1–2 week history of a red, swollen, painful joint
- severe restricted ROM
- Usually only 1 joint affected (most commonly large joints such as hips and knees).

## 3. Additional Characteristics



- May have a fever but is not a reliable indicator
- More common in elderly (>80) or very young children



## 4. Risk factors

- rheumatoid arthritis or OA
- prosthetic joints
- intravenous drug abuse
- alcoholism
- diabetes
- previous intra-articular CSI

## 5. Management

- In view of the 11% mortality rate, any patients with suspected septic arthritis should be admitted to hospital for prompt assessment, care, and IV antibiotic treatment.
- If you are unsure, discuss with GP or senior colleague
- Be aware of your local pathways

