

Acute onset Monoarthritis

- **Definition:**
 - Recent acute onset (over hours-days) of swelling and pain in a single joint.
- **Differential diagnoses include:**
 - Acute gout or calcium pyrophosphate deposition disease, haemarthrosis, septic arthritis, inflammatory oligoarthritis (such as a spondyloarthropathy eg. reactive arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis), tumour (rare)

Information Required

- Duration of symptoms, joint involved, history of trauma
- Associated symptoms: fever, preceding infective illness, urethritis
- Functional Impairment

Investigations Required

- Joint aspiration and synovial fluid analysis is required.
- CRP, ESR, Urate
- ECaLFTs, CBP, blood cultures if sepsis suspected

Fax Referrals to

Rheumatology Outpatients

Fax: FMC (Clinic B) 08 82046105

RGH (GP Liaison) 08 83742591

Red Flags

- 🚩 **Red Flags for septic arthritis**
Joint redness, fever, patient is unwell, portal of entry for infection or risk from haematogenous spread
- 🚩 **Risk of joint sepsis is increased by**
Presence of joint prosthesis or foreign body, pre-existing joint damage, recent joint injection, patient is elderly or immunosuppressed

Suggested GP Management

- **Suspected septic arthritis**, requires an urgent joint aspiration via the rheumatology registrar at FMC or RGH, or send the patient immediately to ED. An infected prosthetic joint must be referred immediately to orthopaedics.
- Suspected septic joints should be aspirated prior to starting antibiotics.
- **Suspected acute gout**, consider colchicine (1mg immediately, followed by 500mcg 1 hour later and a further 500mcg 12 hours later), NSAIDs or prednisolone can be initiated unless contraindicated. If possible joint aspiration and dissection of crystals should be performed before starting treatment. Continue allopurinol if a patient is already on it. Do not start allopurinol in the acute setting.

Clinical Resources

- FMC Medicines Handbook for septic arthritis management guidelines www.rheumatology.org and follow links to clinical practice guidelines

General Information to assist with referrals and the and Referral templates for FMC and RGH are available to download from the SALHN Outpatient Services website www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/SALHNOutpatients

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