

Septic Arthritis

Septic arthritis, caused by a bacterial infection within a joint, presents sudden and noticeable pain and swelling in the affected area. It can affect anyone, including infants and children, but is more common in individuals over 60 and those with specific health or joint issues.

Septic arthritis occurs when bacteria contaminate the synovial fluid, leading to the production of pus and potential joint surface damage. About 80% of cases involve a single joint, with the knee being the most commonly affected. Other common sites include the hip, shoulder, wrist, ankle, elbow, and small joints of the hands and feet.



Causes:

- Bacterial infection is the primary cause of septic arthritis, often introduced through injury, surgery, or infections in surrounding tissues.
- Risk factors include a suppressed immune system, drug abuse, diseases like rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes, and recent joint procedures.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Septic arthritis presents with moderate to severe joint pain, worsened by movement or touch, accompanied by warmth, redness, and restricted mobility.
- Symptoms may include fever, chills, and high white blood cell counts, though they may not always be present, especially in older patients.

Diagnosis:

- Diagnosis involves joint fluid analysis to assess white blood cell count and identify bacteria under a microscope. Culturing the synovial fluid helps determine the specific bacteria causing the infection, aiding in antibiotic selection.
- X-rays may be taken to assess joint damage and monitor changes over time.