

Haematology Department

Living with Sickle Cell Disease – Stress

Information for parents and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to provide you with general information about living with Sickle Cell Disease. If you are ever worried about your child please contact your Sickle Cell Team or take your child to the Accident and Emergency Department.

What is Stress?

Stress is our reaction to being placed under pressure. It is the feelings we get when we have demands placed on us that we find difficult to cope with.

What Causes Stress?

Stress is often caused by some type of change or a situation or event that puts pressure on us. Even good changes can be stressful. Stress can last for a short time or long time.

Common Causes of Short-Term Stress

- Having too much to do and not much time to do it.
- Getting lost.
- Having an argument or listening to people arguing.
- Having to attend the hospital.

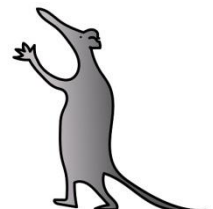
Common Causes of Longer Term Stress

- Having a long term condition.
- Caring for someone who is sick.
- Problems at school

What problems will stress cause for my child?

Stress affects the body. It can cause:

- Headaches.
- Back pain.
- Problems sleeping.
- Stomach upset.
- Weight gain or loss.
- Tense muscles.
- Frequent or more serious colds.



For a child with sickle cell stress can cause them to have more frequent crisis. Stress can also make their pain worse meaning they have to take more pain medicines.

How can I help my child cope with stress?

- Let them to talk about their feelings.
- Talk about their sickle cell and answer any questions they may have. If you feel that you are unable to answer their questions contact your sickle cell team who will be happy to talk to your child with you
- Let them have time to relax.
- Try not to argue or show your concerns around your child.
- Get them to take deep breathes when they are feeling stressed will help to calm them down.
- Exercise can help to prevent and manage stress. It also can help relax your muscles and improve your mood.
- Ask for help—If your child's stress doesn't go away, or keeps getting worse then speak to your sickle cell team. They can refer them to the psychologist who will talk to them about their feelings and give them ways to cope with stress.

Further information

If you have any questions or want any further information please contact your Sickle Cell Team on 0151 252 5070.

Useful websites

www.alderhey.co.uk

www.sicklecellsociety.co.uk



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This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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