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Haematology Department

**Sickle Cell Crisis – Aplastic Crisis**

Information for parents and carers

**Introduction**

This leaflet aims to provide you with general information about the signs and symptoms your child may have when they are having a sickle cell crisis. 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 an aplastic crisis?**

An aplastic crisis is where the bone marrow stops making red blood cell for a short time. This causes your child's haemoglobin to drop. In someone without sickle cell disease this doesn't cause a problem but in someone with sickle cell it can be dangerous. Children with sickle cell disease are anaemic so a further drop in their haemoglobin can cause severe and life-threatening anaemia.

***What causes an aplastic crisis?***

It is usually caused by a viral infection call Parvo virus B19. It is also referred to as 'slapped cheek' and is very common in school age children and usually occurs in spring and early summer.

**What are the signs and symptoms of an aplastic crisis?**

* ****A temperature over 38°C
* rash - usually on limbs and shoulder
* red cheeks
* joint pains
* headaches
* paleness
* tiredness.

**What should I do if I notice any of these symptoms?**

If you notice any of the above symptoms or you are worried about your child you must bring your child to the hospital for review. Your child will have a blood test to see if they are anaemic and how many new red blood cells they are making.

**How is an aplastic crisis treated*?***

If your child is more anaemic than normal and they are not making any new red blood cells they will be admitted to the hospital for a blood transfusion.

If your child is unwell they will also have intravenous fluids (a drip) and pain medicines if they need them.

Any brothers and sisters of a child with sickle cell disease should have blood count checked. Parvovirus is very contagious and siblings will be at risk of having an aplastic crisis too.

**What will happen once my child goes home?**

Once your child is discharged we will usually bring them back to the hospital for review in two –three days’ time. This is to check their haemoglobin and to make sure it hasn't dropped again.

**Will my child get an aplastic crisis again?**

Once your child has had an aplastic crisis it is very unusual to have another one. If you notice your child having the same symptoms you should bring them to the hospital for a blood test and to be seen by the doctor.

***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](http://www.alderhey.co.uk)

[www.sicklecellsociety.co.uk](http://www.sicklecellsociety.co.uk)

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust is neither liable for the contents of any external internet site listed, nor does it endorse any commercial product or service mentioned or advised on any of the sites.

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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