



SICKLE CELL CLINIC

Pain

Why does Sickle Cell Disease cause pain?

- Sickle cell pain occurs when your child's red blood cells change shape, or "sickle".
- During a "crisis", the red blood cells change from round, soft and slippery to C-shaped, hard and sticky. When red blood cells begin to sickle, they stick to the inside of blood vessels and cause a blockage.
- Pain occurs because the tissue beyond the blockage cannot get the oxygen it needs. Sickling can happen anywhere in the body.

What causes red blood cells to sickle?

- Any type of infection (cold, flu)
- Dehydration
- Temperature changes
- Fever
- A lack of oxygen (asthma)
- Stress and anxiety

Symptoms of pain crisis:

- Crying or Fussy
- Swelling
- Warmth to touch
- Decreased movement
- Redness
- Pain to touch

What should I do if my child has pain?

Step 1: Check your child's temperature to make sure he/she does not have fever. If your child has fever of 101 degrees or higher, you should go right away to the pediatrician or to the closest emergency room.

Step 2: Determine if your child is having mild pain or severe pain. Make sure your child is drinking plenty of fluids by mouth during a pain crisis.

If the pain is mild, you may give your child a dose of Acetaminophen (Tylenol). Three hours later you can give a dose of ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil). Check package for correct dose.

You can continue to alternate these medications every 3 hours until the mild pain has resolved.

If the pain is severe or does not respond to Tylenol and ibuprofen, We recommend that you give your child his or her prescription opioid pain medication.

Alternate this prescription opioid pain medication every 3 hours with ibuprofen (not Tylenol) until the pain has resolved.

We recommend that you try to manage pain at home with opioid pain medication and ibuprofen for 12 to 24 hours before taking the next step (Step 3).

Step 3: If the pain does not respond to opioid pain medication and ibuprofen or your child develops trouble breathing or fever, you should take your child to the closest emergency room.

What to expect in the emergency room.

- Tell the doctor and/or nurse that your child has sickle cell disease and pain.
- Your child will probably get an intravenous (IV) to receive fluids and pain medications.
- If the pain is not improved with IV pain medication in the emergency room, your child will likely be admitted to the hospital.

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What to expect if my child is admitted to the hospital.

- Your child will continue to receive IV pain medications and possibly IV fluids until the pain has improved.
- Some children may need a blood transfusion during the hospital stay.
- You can be discharged from the hospital when your child can keep the pain under control by taking pain medication by mouth. These will be the same pain medications that you can give your child at home.

What to expect once my child is discharged home.

- The goal of the admission is to get your child to a level of pain that can be managed at home with pain medications that your child takes by mouth.
- It may take several days before the pain goes away completely once you are home.
- Continue your prescription pain meds at home as directed by your doctor until the pain completely goes away.