

## Paediatrics

# Henoch-Schönlein purpura (HSP)

**This leaflet explains about Henoch-Schönlein purpura (HSP), who it affects, its symptoms and treatment.**

## What is Henoch-Schönlein purpura?

Henoch-Schönlein purpura, or HSP for short, is a disease where small blood vessels called capillaries become inflamed. Children between the ages of 2 and 11 years old seem to develop HSP more often than younger or older children.

HSP is rare, affecting fewer than 1 in 5,000 children. We do not know exactly what causes HSP. It often follows a viral infection, like a cold. HSP is not an inherited disease and is not infectious so it cannot be passed on from person to person.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms described below can come and go for several weeks:

- A purple-red rash appears on the buttocks, legs, elbows or sometimes on the back. The rash does not turn white if you press on the skin. In severe cases the rash can become swollen and ulcerated.
- There may be tummy pains, which can be severe. Occasionally there may be blood in the stools. You should tell your doctor if this happens.
- Joints may become red and swollen causing pain and sometimes difficulty in walking.
- The kidneys may become inflamed and leak blood and protein into the urine. This can be associated with high blood pressure. Very rarely the



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kidneys can stop working properly and may need treatment (see below).

In a few cases, other parts of the body can be affected too. Boys may have a swollen scrotum, which in rare cases, can lead to twisting of the testis (testicular torsion). If this happens, it will need immediate treatment. Children with HSP often appear very well, but doctors will have run tests to check for other causes of the symptoms.

## How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for HSP, and it will get better on its own. The main aim of treatment is to relieve symptoms.

If the joints are uncomfortable, then a mild pain-relieving medicine such as paracetamol should be taken to reduce any pain. Resting in bed can also help. Steroids can also help some children with severe symptoms.

If your child suddenly develops severe tummy pain, you should contact your doctor, as this may need further investigation and treatment.

## When you get home

It will be important to monitor your child's blood pressure and test the urine for blood and protein during the first few months after HSP has been diagnosed.

Your child can go to school or nursery but he or she may get tired easily. Please tell your schoolteacher or nursery leader that your child has been ill and give them a copy of this leaflet so they know what to expect.

Your child may need to have regular check ups as an outpatient for a while. We will send you your child's outpatient appointment in the post.

## What is the outlook for children with HSP?

The outlook for most children overall is very good. The symptoms tend to disappear within a few weeks, although in some children, they may return weeks or months later. If the kidneys have been affected, in a small

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number of cases, this can lead to further kidney problems, which may need treatment in the long term.

### Is there a support group?

Henoch Schönlein Purpura Support Group

c/o Contact a Family

209-211 City Road London EC1V 1JN

Tel: 01733 204368 between 10.00am and 2.00pm.

Email: [hsp.help@inbox.com](mailto:hsp.help@inbox.com)

Visit: [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact your GP.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 024 7696 7234 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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