

## Children's Haemoglobinopathy

# Medications, vaccinations, and travel with sickle cell disease

### Medications

Some medications for people with sickle cell disease need to be given or monitored in hospital and will be prescribed in clinic. These medications may include:

- hydroxycarbamide (also known as hydroxyurea)
- testosterone
- chelation agents, such as desferrioxamine (Desferal®)
- deferiprone (Ferriprox®)
- deferasirox (Exjade®)

If your child takes large doses of strong painkillers such as opiates, they will need to be prescribed from one place only as part of national guidance. Other medicines except those above should be prescribed by your GP.

Children should take a preventative dose of penicillin V (penicillin prophylaxis) twice a day for the rest of their life to reduce the risk of infection, illness, and death.

This is available in a liquid and tablet form. The bottles of liquid expire after one week, so we encourage children to learn how to take tablets as soon as it is possible. If liquid is needed, we recommend that the repeat prescription be for 8 to 10 bottles. The pharmacist should dispense it as a powder and teach parents to make it up with the required amount of water.



## Patient Information

The doses of penicillin are:

- Up to 1 year of age - 62.5 mg twice a day
- 1 to 5 years of age - 125 mg twice a day
- 5 years old and over - 250 mg twice a day

Your doctor may also recommend that your child takes folic acid. Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps the body make healthy red blood cells. People with sickle cell disease may not have enough red blood cells as theirs may only last less than a month, compared to 3 months in people without sickle cell disease.

The doses of folic acid are 2.5 to 5mg daily.

## Vaccinations

We recommend that your child has the vaccinations listed below, given by your GP. We ask you to tell us when your child has had them so that we can keep your hospital records up to date.

We know that some children may have missed the normal childhood vaccination schedule or may have been vaccinated abroad where the schedule may have been different. You should discuss this with your GP so that they can bring your child up to date with any vaccinations they may have missed.

- Normal childhood vaccination schedule
- Pneumovax (from two years of age and then every five years)
- Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) vaccine
- Meningococcal ACWY vaccine
- Meningococcal B vaccine (newly available)
- BCG
- Annual flu vaccine

## Patient Information

### **Travel**

Travel can lead to an increased risk of problems (crises) due to blood clots (thrombosis), infection, extreme tiredness (fatigue), dehydration and change of climate.

#### **Air travel**

Please inform the airline that your child has sickle cell anaemia. Keep your child active (walk around at least every 30 minutes) and drink plenty. Avoid alcohol. If your child is well and in a pressurised cabin, they will not need extra oxygen.

There is a possible increased risk of blood blockage in the spleen (splenic infarct) from air travel. This should be considered by your doctor if your child has pain in the left upper part of their tummy area (abdomen).

#### **Overland travel**

Make sure your child has plenty of breaks so that they can move around, and that they have plenty to drink. Make sure they have enough rest so that they don't become too tired.

#### **Antibiotics**

Your child should take their regular penicillin or equivalent (such as erythromycin) if they are allergic to penicillin.

Ask your GP for a treatment course of antibiotics in case your child needs them. However, if your child is truly unwell when you are away, they will need to see a doctor.

Seek early treatment for dog bites, tick bites and other infections. Remember that if your child has sickle cell disease, their spleen does not work well and therefore they are more prone to infections. This risk is reduced with vaccinations and penicillin, but there will always still be an increased risk.

## Patient Information

### **Travel vaccinations**

Please get all the routine vaccinations as recommended for your area of travel, for example meningococcal ACW Y and hepatitis A vaccine if travelling to an area of increased risk of infection.

### **Malaria**

People with sickle cell are at risk of malaria, even if they have lived in a malarial area or return there regularly. Malaria in sickle cell can be life-threatening.

It is important that your child wears protective clothing, insect repellent, uses mosquito nets and takes malaria prevention tablets. Your child may need to start the medicine a little earlier than recommended to check that they are not having any side effects. Take medicines used to treat malaria with you if you are staying far from medical care.

You should be aware of your child's G6PD status as some medications may cause problems in those with low levels of G6PD.

### **Insurance**

Get travel insurance that covers costs for bringing you and your child back to the UK if they were to fall ill. You need to declare their sickle cell disease, or their insurance will be invalid. The Sickle Cell Society may be able to recommend insurers.

## **Where can I get more information?**

The Sickle Cell Society

54 Station Rd, London, NW10 4UA

Tel: 020 8861 7795

Website: [www.sicklecellsociety.org](http://www.sicklecellsociety.org)

## Patient Information

The UK Thalassaemia Society

19 The Broadway, London, N14 6PH

Tel: 020 8882 0011

Website: [www.ukts.org](http://www.ukts.org)

NHS Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screening Programme

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/sickle-cell-thalassaemia>

## Contacts

Consultant Paediatrician ~~Dr Coad~~ & Dr Farooqi & Dr Neuling –Secretary: -  
024 7696 7234

Paediatric Specialist Nurses: Amy Heap & ~~Sarah Martynyszyn~~

Service hours: ~~8:00am – 4:00pm~~ 9am – 5pm (Monday - Friday)

Secretary: 024 7696 7234

024 7696 4000 ask switchboard to Bleep 4566

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Mobile: Amy - 0787 668 1069 Ring or Text (~~Mon-Weds~~)

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

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

## Patient Information

### Did we get it right?

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#### Document History

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