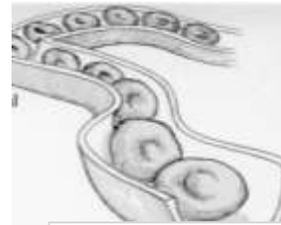


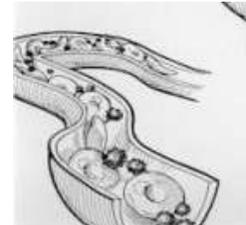
Sickle Cell Disease: Infection

What do I need to know about infections and sickle cell disease?

People with sickle cell disease tend to get infections more often. These include pneumonia and bacterial infections in the blood and bones. These infections can make a person with sickle cell very sick. Some can be life threatening. It is very important to watch for signs of infection, such as a fever.



Normal blood cells



Infected blood cells

What can I do to be prepared and to prevent infections?

- Be sure you have a thermometer at home, school and daycare. Take one with you when you go out in case you need to take a temperature. A person with sickle cell should always take their temperature with a thermometer if they seem sick.
- All patients with sickle cell disease are on penicillin or another antibiotic until 6 years of age. This helps to decrease the chance of a bacterial infection that could cause that child to get very sick.
- **Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of germs that cause infections.**
- Immunizations need to be kept up to date. The pneumococcal vaccine is also needed. This vaccine helps prevent a serious bacterial infection that is common in children with Sickle Cell Disease.

What do I need to do if I/my child seem sick?

1. Take a temperature under the arm (axillary). **Go to the Emergency Department right away if it is 101.5°F (38.6°C) or higher. You must be seen within 1 hour of noticing the fever.**

Do not give any medicine such as Ibuprofen or Tylenol for the fever. Fever is sometimes the only sign of the start of a serious bacterial infection.

2. Call the nurse or doctor in the clinic if there are other signs of infection, such as:
 - **Cold symptoms or breathing problems:**
 - Cough.
 - Sore throat.
 - Runny or stuffy nose.
 - Rattling sound in chest.
 - Fast breathing or having a hard time breathing.

- **Change in activity:**
 - Less active than normal.
 - More sleepy than normal.
 - Acting sluggish or listless.
- **Pain:**
 - Pain or burning with urination.
 - Swelling and pain of an area.
 - Very bad headache.
- **Other Symptoms:**
 - More crabby than normal.
 - Vomiting.
 - Diarrhea.
 - Yellow coloring in the white part of the eye or the skin. This could be jaundice.

What happens in the hospital?

- The patient will most likely need to stay in the room. This is called isolation, which stops the spread of infection to other patients.
- Blood may be drawn.
- IV antibiotics are often given.
- Medicine may be given for pain or fever.

ALERT: Call the doctor, nurse, or the Sickle Cell Center if you have any concerns or there are:

- Any signs of infection listed above.
- Special health care needs not covered by this information.

If your child has a temperature of 101.5°F (38.6°C) or higher, take your child to the emergency department right away. Your child must be seen within 1 hour. Be sure to tell the staff that your child has Sickle Cell Disease.

Sickle Cell Center. Call (414) 257-1232, Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM. **Ask to talk with a nurse.**

After hours, weekends or holidays. Call (414) 266-2000. Ask for the hematologist on call.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for yourself or your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.