

Sickle Cell Disease: Preventing a Pain Crisis

Pediatrics • Hematology (Sickle Cell, Leukemia)

In sickle cell disease, red blood cells become stiff and curved, like the letter C. These cells get stuck in small blood vessels and block blood flow. This causes pain and harms organs. These steps help prevent a crisis.

Drink plenty every day

- Give your child water often, every day.
- Give extra fluids in hot weather, during sports, and when sick.
- Your child's daily fluid goal: _____.

Avoid triggers

- Dress your child warmly in cold weather. Avoid swimming in cold water.
- Avoid getting too hot. Rest before getting worn out.
- Ask before travel to high mountains or flights in small planes.
- Keep your child away from smoke.

Give medicines and vaccines

- Give hydroxyurea every day as prescribed. Keep blood test visits.
- Young children: give penicillin twice a day, as prescribed.
- Keep all vaccines up to date. Get a flu shot every year.

Manage mild pain at home

- Give extra fluids. Use warm packs or a warm bath.

- Give pain medicine as your pain plan says.
- **Never use ice or cold packs.** Cold makes the crisis worse.

Fever is an emergency

- **For a temperature of 101 F (38.3 C) or higher, go to the emergency room at once.**
- Do not wait to see if it goes down. Your child's body fights germs poorly.

Call your provider today if you have

- A child whose pain does not get better with the home plan: call right away
- A child who looks paler, more tired, or yellow
- A child who cannot keep fluids down

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- A child with chest pain or trouble breathing
- A child with sudden weakness, numbness, or trouble speaking
- A painful erection that lasts more than 2 hours
- A child with a swollen belly, or very pale and weak

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/sickle-cell-crisis-prevention/patient

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