

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)

Sickle Cell Disease is an inherited blood condition which can affect various organs in your child's body. One of the organs affected is the spleen which helps the body to fight infections such as pneumonia, septicaemia and meningitis. When sickling occurs in the spleen it causes it to shrink (hyposplenism), which means that it doesn't work as effectively to fight infection.

Staying well with Sickle Cell Disease

Because of their small spleen, children with SCD may be more susceptible to severe infections, in particular, those infections caused by certain types of bacteria. These bacteria include pneumococcal, Haemophilus influenza type b, meningococcal bacteria and salmonella bacteria. To help protect your child against developing infections caused by some of these bacteria, a daily antibiotic may be prescribed. The antibiotic usually prescribed for this purpose is Penicillin V or Erythromycin if you have a penicillin allergy.

- Penicillin V helps prevent life-threatening infections
- Children with SCD or hyposplenism are more likely to have difficulty fighting infections, such as pneumococcal infections which can result in serious illness.
- By giving your child a regular daily dose of Penicillin V, you can protect them against such serious infections
- Your child must take Penicillin V daily, even when they are well, to protect them against infection
- If your child has or develops a penicillin allergy, there is an alternative medication such as Erythromycin

Frequently asked questions

How much Penicillin V should my child have?

When given to prevent infection rather than to treat an existing infection, Penicillin V is usually prescribed in a low dose. It is important to follow your doctor's instruction which will be shown on the medicine label.

How is Penicillin V taken?

Penicillin V comes in both tablet and in liquid form

Penicillin V is usually given once or twice per day when prescribed to protect against infection.

Tablets should be swallowed whole with a glass of water, juice or milk and should **not** be chewed.

Suspension (liquid form) should be measured using an oral syringe or medicine spoon.

Your child should continue to take Penicillin V every day, even when they feel well, to protect them from infection.

What do I do if my child vomits after taking Penicillin V?

If you can see the whole tablet when your child vomits, you should repeat the dose. Otherwise, wait for the next normal dose before giving any more.

If your child is taking liquid penicillin, then you should not repeat the dose. Wait for the next normal dose before giving any more.

If your child continues to vomit the penicillin you should contact your doctor/nurse for advice

Are there any side effects from this medication?

Many patients take Penicillin and suffer no side effects.

However -

If your child complains of:

- Rash
- Itching
- Stomach upset

you should seek advice from your doctor.

In the rare event that these symptoms are more serious, such as

- problems with their breathing
- swelling at the lips and/or tongue,

you should contact the emergency services by dialling 999

Can my child take other medications at the same time as Penicillin V?

Tell your GP or pharmacist that your child is taking daily Penicillin V before they take any other medications. This means that the GP can confirm there are no contraindications to taking certain medicines at the same time.

What if my child becomes unwell even though they are taking daily antibiotics?

If your child feels unwell or has a temperature, you should still contact your doctor/nurse for advice. The low dose of Penicillin V your child is taking would not be enough to treat an infection and your doctor may want your child to have other medicines. Becoming unwell can be very serious for children with SCD, therefore you should always contact your doctor/nurse as a matter of urgency.

This leaflet can be made available in other languages and other formats (e.g. larger print) on request from the SPAH office.

For further information contact:

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Information for the Parent/ Carer of a child with Sickle Cell Disease on Antibiotics

