



**SPAHA**

SCOTTISH PAEDIATRIC AND ADULT HAEMOGLOBINOPATHIES NETWORK

# **Patient Information**

## **Calling for an ambulance during a sickle cell crisis**

The Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) receive over 2000 calls a day from all over Scotland. To make sure patients in an immediately life-threatening condition are given the care they need as soon as possible, calls are grouped according to the symptoms described to the call handler during the 999 call.

When you call 999, an operator will ask which emergency service you need. If it's a medical emergency, ask for the ambulance service.

If you are having a sickle cell crisis, please tell the call handler. This will allow them to ask you particular questions about your symptoms and prioritise your call appropriately.

### **What information will I need?**

You will be asked to give the following information.

- The phone number that you are calling from
- The address where you are, including the postcode, if possible
- What has happened

As soon as the call handler knows where you are, help will be on its way.

You will also be asked to give some extra information, such as:

- your age, sex and medical history;
- if you are calling for someone else, whether they are conscious and breathing; and
- if there is any bleeding or chest pain.

### **What should I say about my condition?**

We understand that when you are experiencing unbearable pain it can be very difficult to explain this to the call handlers. If this does happen:

- key words you can say are '**sickle**' and '**crisis**' and where your pain is, such as '**legs**' or '**chest**'; and
- tell the call handler if you have a fever or breathing difficulties or signs of a stroke.

This way the call handler will know how best to deal with your call. Answering these questions does not delay the ambulance but can help the call handler to give you important first-aid advice while the ambulance is on its way.

Please try to answer the questions the call handler asks so they can get the right help to you as soon as possible. If English is not your first language, or if you have hearing difficulties, the call handlers will have ways they can help.

### **What can the ambulance crew do for me before I get to hospital?**

Crew with different skill levels may be on the ambulance or fast-response car which attends, and they are able to give you different types of pain relief.

- If a paramedic comes out to you, they can give you Entonox (gas and air), paracetamol or ibuprofen, or morphine if your treatment plan advises this.
- If you are attended by a non-paramedic crew, they can give Entonox and pain relief such as ibuprofen and paracetamol and can ask for paramedic assistance if necessary.

Whoever attends will work with you to reduce your pain on the way to hospital. It is really important that you take your own medication with you and tell the ambulance crew what you have already taken.

### **Where will they take me?**

The ambulance crew will, wherever possible, take you to your specialist treatment centre. However, if you are a long way from home when you are taken ill, the crew will take you to the nearest appropriate emergency department.

## Scottish Paediatric and Adult Haemoglobinopathies Network

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The SAS cannot travel long distances to take people to preferred hospitals as other patients who are waiting for ambulances need us to attend them. All emergency departments can treat sickle cell crises and you can be transferred later for ongoing treatment if needed.

For more information about SPAH:

SPAH Website: [www.spah.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.spah.scot.nhs.uk)

Email: [nss.niccs@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.niccs@nhs.scot)

If you need this leaflet in another format, please contact

[NSS.EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot](mailto:NSS.EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot), 0131 275 6000

BSL ContactScotlandBSL:

Contact Scotland BSL is a video relay service, providing instant British Sign Language (BSL) video interpreting for all calls to Scotland ([contactscotland-bsl.org](http://contactscotland-bsl.org)).

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