



**SPAHA**

SCOTTISH PAEDIATRIC AND ADULT HAEMOGLOBINOPATHIES NETWORK

## Patient Information

# Calling an ambulance during a sickle cell crisis

This document has been prepared by NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) on behalf of SPAHA. Accountable to Scottish Government, NSS works at the heart of the health service providing national strategic services to the rest of NHS Scotland and other public sector organisations to help them deliver their services more efficiently and effectively. The SPAHA Network is a collaboration of stakeholders involved in care of patients with haemoglobinopathies, who are supported by an NSS Programme Team to drive improvement across the care pathway.

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The Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) receive over 2000 calls every day from across Scotland. To make sure patients in an immediately life-threatening condition get help quickly, the calls are sorted based on the symptoms described to the call handler during the 999 call. An operator will ask which emergency service you need, say you need an ambulance.

If you are having a sickle cell crisis, please tell the call handler right away. This will allow them to ask the right questions about your symptoms and make sure your call is treated with the right level of urgency.

### 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
- 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 happens:

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

This way the call handler will know how best to deal with your call. Answering these questions won't 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 so they can send the right help to you as quickly as possible. If English isn't your first language, or if you have hearing difficulties, the call handlers have ways they can support you.

#### 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.

Ambulances or fast-response cars may be staffed by crews with different levels of training. They can offer 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 required
- 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 help manage your pain on the way to hospital. It is important to bring your own medication with you and tell the ambulance crew what you have already taken. This helps them give you the best care.

#### Where will they take me?

The ambulance crew will, wherever possible, take you to your local, specialist hospital. However, if you're a long way from home, the crew will take you to the nearest appropriate emergency department. This may not be your preferred hospital.

#### Further information

Can be found on the Scottish Paediatric and Adult Haemoglobinopathies Network (SPAHS) website: [spah.scot.nhs.uk](http://spah.scot.nhs.uk)

If you require an alternative format, please contact [nss.equalitydiversity@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.equalitydiversity@nhs.scot), telephone: 0131 275 600

British Sign Language, please contact Scotland BSL: [Contact Scotland \(contactscotland-bsl.org\)](http://contactscotland-bsl.org)