NHS SCOTLAND

SPAH
SCOTTISH PAEDIATRIC AND ADULT HAEMOGLOBINOPATHIES NETWORK

Information for parents or carers of children with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) about antibiotics

This document has been prepared by Public Services Delivery Scotland (PSD Scotland) on behalf of the Scottish Paediatric and Adult Haemoglobinopathies Network (SPAH). Accountable to Scottish Government, PSD Scotland 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 SPAH Network is a collaboration of stakeholders involved in care of patients with haemoglobinopathies, who are supported by a PSD Scotland Programme Team to drive improvement across the care pathway.

©PSD Scotland 2026. You can copy or reproduce the information in this resource for use within NHS Scotland and for non-commercial educational purposes under creative commons CC BY-NC 4.0 Deed | Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International | Creative Commons. Use of this document for commercial purposes is permitted only with the written permission of PSD Scotland.

NSD610-017.36 V3
Unless this leaflet being accessed from www.spah.scot.nhs.uk it may not be the current version.

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)

Sickle Cell Disease is a blood condition passed down through families that can affect different parts of your child's body. One of the organs it affects is the spleen. The spleen plays a role in fighting infections like pneumonia, septicaemia and meningitis. When sickling happens in the spleen it causes it to shrink (hyposplenism). This makes the spleen less effective at fighting infections.

Keeping your child healthy

Children with SCD have smaller spleens. This makes them more likely to get serious infections, especially from specific bacteria. These bacteria include pneumococcal, haemophilus influenza type b, meningococcal bacteria and salmonella bacteria. Your doctor will recommend your child a daily antibiotic to prevent infections caused by these bacteria. The main antibiotic used for this is Phenoxymethylpenicillin, also known as Penicillin V. If your child is allergic to Penicillin, they will get Erythromycin instead.

- Children with SCD or hyposplenism struggle more to fight infections. Pneumococcal infections, for example, can cause serious illness in children.
- Giving your child Penicillin V every day can protect them from these serious infections.
- Your child needs to take Penicillin V every day, even when they are not sick, to protect them from infections.

Frequently asked questions

1. How much Penicillin V should my child take?

- The amount of Penicillin V given to prevent infection is usually prescribed in a low dose. It is important to follow your doctor's instructions on the medicine label.

2. How is Penicillin V taken?

- Penicillin V is available in tablet and liquid form.
- It is usually taken twice per day.
- Swallow tablets whole with water, juice or milk.
- Sometimes, doctors prescribe tablets that dissolve in water. Use an oral syringe or a cup to measure the liquid medicine.
- Keep giving your child Penicillin V every day, even if they feel fine, to keep them protected.

3. What 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 scheduled dose.
- If your child takes liquid penicillin and vomits, do not repeat the dose. Wait for the next scheduled dose.
- You should contact your doctor or nurse for advice if your child continues to vomit after taking the penicillin.

4. Are there any side effects?

- Most patients don't have side effects, but if your child develops a rash, itching, or stomach upset, talk to your doctor.
- In rare cases, if your child has trouble breathing or their lips or tongue swell, call 999 immediately.

5. 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 way, the GP or pharmacist can make sure it's safe to take other medicines together.

6. What if my child becomes unwell despite taking daily antibiotics?

- If your child feels unwell or has a temperature, contact your doctor or nurse for advice. The small amount of Penicillin V might not be enough to treat an infection. Your doctor may give other medicines instead. It's crucial to act quickly, as becoming unwell can be very serious for children with SCD.

For more information about SPAH and other helpful resources:

SPAH Website: www.spah.scot.nhs.uk
Email: nss.spah@nhs.scot

If you need this leaflet in another format (such as large print), please:

- Email: psd.contact-us@nhs.scot
- Phone: 0131 275 6000
- Contact: BSL ContactScotlandBSL at contactscotland-bsl.org.