

## **When to Call the Doctor or Go to the Emergency Room Advice for Parents of Young Children with Sickle Cell Disease**

**When it comes to fever and infections, your child with sickle cell disease is DIFFERENT from other children.**

- Babies and children with sickle cell disease cannot fight off infections as well as other babies.
- Children with sickle cell disease have died in a matter of hours when they had certain bacteria infections that were not treated quickly. They could not fight off these infections without help.

### **When to Call to Be Seen **Right Away****

**Call your child's doctor or nurse right away if your child has one of these danger signs:**

- **Fever of **101°** or higher (Never ignore this!)**
- **Severe headache or dizziness**
- **Severe pain or swelling in the belly**
- **Rapid breathing, or coughing with chest pain**
- **Very pale skin or palms or inner eye lids**
- **Cannot move hands, arms or legs**
- **Limps without pain**
- **Cannot wake up**
- **Slurred speech or drooling**

**If you cannot reach your child's doctor, go to the emergency room right away. **Make sure to tell the emergency room doctors right away that your child has sickle cell disease.****

### **When to Call for Advice**

**Call your child's doctor or nurse for advice if your child does any of these things or has any of these problems:**

- |                               |                                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Vomiting                    | • Is not acting like they usually do |
| • Diarrhea                    | • Refuses to take penicillin         |
| • Eyes look yellow (jaundice) | • Is less active than usual          |
| • Pain                        | • Refuses to eat or drink            |
| • Keeps coughing              |                                      |

**If Your Child Has Fever  
Here's what you need to DO:**



▶ **Learn how to take your child's temperature**

- Your child's doctor or nurse can teach you how to use a thermometer.

▶ **Take fever seriously.**

- Call your child's doctor **right away**—especially if the fever gets to **101°**.

▶ **Do NOT wait for a “better time” to bring your child in.**

- If the fever starts at night, do not wait for the morning.
- If the weather is bad, do not wait until it gets better.
- **You can call 911 if the weather makes driving difficult.**
- If you are at work, do not wait until it is time for you to get off or close from work.
- If a doctor or a nurse tells you to wait or give acetaminophen (Tylenol<sup>®</sup>), or ibuprofen (Motrin<sup>®</sup> or Advil<sup>®</sup>) and check the temperature again later, **DON'T** do it. They might not be aware that fever is an emergency for a child with sickle cell disease.

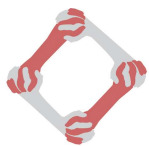
▶ **Do NOT give fever medicines to make the fever go down.**

- Do not give your baby fever medications, like Tylenol<sup>®</sup> or Advil<sup>®</sup> until you talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or hematologist.
- Fever medications will only hide the symptoms of infection.
- Think of the fever as a warning sign of an infection that can be fatal.

## Have a Plan for Getting Your Child to the Doctor or Emergency Room

- ▶ **Ask your child’s doctor and hematologist which emergency room you should use.**
  - Do this ahead of time.
  - Then you will know what to do if there is an emergency.
  
- ▶ **Write down the directions from your house to your child’s doctor’s office and hospital emergency room**
  - Make sure anyone who regularly cares for your child has a copy of the directions.
  - Keep a copy of these directions with you at all times.
  
- ▶ **Keep a list of phone numbers so that you can call a cab or ambulance company if needed**
  - Keep a copy of this list by your phone.
  
- ▶ **Find out if your Community-based Sickle Cell Program offers transportation services.**
  
- ▶ **Ask your family, friends and neighbors if they will help you when you need to get your child to the doctor or hospital quickly**
  - Keep a list of phone numbers of people that are willing to help out in an emergency.
  
- ▶ **Ask your child’s doctor or hematologist for a “travel letter” that you can take with you when traveling.**
  - You can show the letter to other doctors if your child gets sick while you are away.

### Credits



National Coordinating  
and Evaluation Center

Sickle Cell Disease and Newborn Screening Program

Sickle Cell Disease and Newborn Screening  
Program



SCDAA National Headquarters  
2008

This booklet is made available through grant number U38MC00217-07-03 from the Genetic Services Branch of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau