

Henoch-Schönlein Purpura (HSP)

Information and advice for parents and carers

Paediatrics

What is Henoch-Schönlein Purpura (HSP)?

Henoch-Schönlein Purpura (HSP) is an illness where the small blood vessels in the body become inflamed and fragile. HSP is not infectious so it cannot be passed on from one person to another.

About 2 in 10,000 children in the UK get HSP each year.

What are the symptoms of HSP?

The symptoms of HSP are:

- A red or purple spotty rash. This is usually on the feet, lower legs and bottom but can occur anywhere on the body and does not disappear when a glass is pressed on it. Everyone with HSP has a rash.
- Painful swollen joints, especially the knees and ankles.
- Abdominal (tummy) pain.

Some also experience:

- Feeling or being sick.
- Diarrhoea which may have blood in it.
- Blood in their urine.
- A temperature of 37.5°C or above.
- Headaches.

HSP can also cause kidney problems, bleeding in the gut (intestines) and, in boys, a swollen and painful scrotum.

What causes HSP?

HSP is caused by the body's immune system reacting to something, but we don't know exactly what to. The reaction may be triggered by:

- an infection or cold,
- a vaccination or medicine, or
- an insect bite.

How is HSP diagnosed?

HSP is diagnosed by examining your child and doing a blood test and urine test.

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How is HSP treated?

HSP will usually get better on its own within 4 weeks without any treatment, but your child will be given painkillers if they have joint and tummy pains and will need to rest.

Some children can develop kidney problems or bleeding in their gut so your child may need to be looked after in hospital so we can monitor them for these. If your child does develop kidney problems or bleeding in their gut these will need treatment. The treatment will depend on how severe they are and your child's doctor will discuss this with you beforehand.

Your child's rash will gradually fade and disappear without treatment, but may come back for a few months without the other symptoms of HSP.

Your child is not infectious while they have HSP so they do not need to stay away from other people. However they should get plenty of rest until they are feeling better.

Follow-up

If the HSP was mild, your child will need to have a follow-up appointment at the hospital after about 3 months to check that all the symptoms have resolved.

You will also need to check your child's urine regularly for blood and protein during this period because there is still a risk that their kidneys could become affected. To do this you will need to get your child to pass urine into a clean container, and then dip a testing strip into it. The testing strip will detect if there is blood or protein in your child's urine. The nurses will teach you how read the testing strip and tell you what to do with the result before you leave the hospital.

If the HSP affected your child's kidneys he/she may need to see the doctor more often and for longer than 3 months.

Symptoms to report

If your child experiences any of the following symptoms after he/she has been diagnosed with HSP please contact their GP or the ward they were treated on:

- their joints become more painful
- they have severe tummy ache
- their urine becomes red-coloured
- their urine test shows they have more protein in their urine than before
- they have diarrhoea with blood in it.

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Contact details

If your child has been treated in hospital and, within 24 hours of them being discharged, you have any questions or concerns please contact the ward they were treated on:

Lyndon Ground

0121 507 3717

Lyndon 1

0121 507 3800

Paediatric Assessment Unit

(City Hospital)

0121 507 4019

After this time, or if your child has not required hospital treatment, please contact your GP or NHS Direct.

NHS Direct

0845 46 47

Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites www.swbh.nhs.uk and www.swbhengage.com, follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Patient UK Professional Reference, 'Henoch Schonlein Purpura', October 2009

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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