

Henoch Schönlein Purpura (HSP)

This leaflet explains what HSP is, how it will affect your child and how it is managed. If you have any concerns or questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

What is HSP?

Henoch Schönlein Purpura (HSP) is a condition which causes the small blood vessels to become inflamed. This inflammation is called vasculitis. It particularly affects the blood vessels in the skin to cause a rash called purpura. It also commonly affects the blood vessels in the kidneys, intestines and the joints to cause the common symptoms of HSP.

What are the causes?

Why these blood vessels get inflamed is not known but it may be triggered by a recent viral or bacterial infection. HSP can happen at any age but is most common in the 2-10 years age group. It affects boys more than girls.

HSP is not contagious.

Signs and symptoms of HSP

Skin – HSP causes a typical rash. This looks like bleeding points or bruises under the skin and they don't disappear when they are pressed with a glass. It is usually worse on the legs and buttocks. Sometimes, when the rash first starts it can look like urticaria (nettle sting rash).

Joints – HSP causes swelling and pain of the joints, usually the knees and ankles. Sometimes the skin on the back of the hands and feet can also get swollen and tender.

Abdominal pain – the inflamed blood vessels can cause abdominal (tummy) pain. Occasionally, there can be bleeding and you must inform your doctor if there is any blood in the child's faeces (stool). Abdominal pain is usually mild and settles with simple painkiller medicine. If the abdominal pain is very severe the child must see a doctor.

Kidneys – Your doctor will know if there is a problem with your kidneys by testing a urine specimen and looking for blood or protein. The child's blood pressure will also be checked. Serious problems with the kidneys are uncommon but it is important to monitor this. Your GP and the hospital will keep testing this over the next 6-12 months.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for HSP and symptoms usually settle on their own over about six weeks. One third of patients will have recurrence of symptoms.

Joint pain and abdominal is managed with simple painkillers like paracetamol. Ibuprofen can be used if there is no kidney involvement. In very severe cases, steroids can be used. Your doctor will need to monitor your urine and your blood pressure over the next year. Minor changes are common and usually settle without a lasting problem. Serious kidney involvement is uncommon. Most patients will show a problem with their kidneys in the first three months after being diagnosed with HSP.

Abdominal pain usually settles with paracetamol. In very severe cases your doctor may recommend using steroid medicines.

Contacting us

If you require any further advice please contact:

Kempton Day Bed Unit: 0118 322 7512 / 8754 (Mon-Fri 7am-7pm)

Lion and Dolphin Wards: 0118 322 7519 / 8075 (outside of these hours)

Further information

Henoch Schönlein Purpura Support Group, c/o Contact a Family, 209-211 City Road, London EC1V 1JN

Tel: 01733 204368 (10am - 2pm)

E-mail: hsphelp@inbox.com Web: www.cafamily.org.uk/Direct/h36.html

UK National Kidney Federation, The Point, Coach Road, Shireoaks, Worksop S81 8BW

Helpline: 0845 601 0209 Web: www.kidney.org.uk

More information about the Trust can be found on our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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Reviewed: July 2019

Review due: July 2021