

Henoch-Schonlein Purpura

What is Henoch-Schonlein Purpura (HSP)?

HSP is an abnormal response of the body's immune system. The body areas most commonly affected are the small blood vessels, joints, gastrointestinal system (stomach and bowel) and more rarely the kidneys. Very rarely the brain can be severely affected.

What causes HSP?

- The exact cause of HSP is unknown.
- It often develops following a respiratory illness (for example, a cold or flu).
- Viral or bacterial illnesses have been known to cause HSP but are less common. After an infection an allergic type response of the immune system occurs resulting in the symptoms below.

Signs and symptoms

- Skin rash: Looks like small bruises or small reddish-purple spots occurring mainly on the legs and buttocks and sometimes elsewhere.
- Abdominal pain.
- Pain in the joints such as the knees and ankles, which is usually short-term.
- Swelling may be seen on the hands and feet and the scrotum in boys.
- Blood in the stools (poo) or urine: This is caused by the blood vessels in the bowel and kidneys becoming inflamed.

Treatment

Each child is treated according to his or her symptoms.

- Pain relief is usually all your child will require. If the symptoms are severe or prolonged, steroids may be used to help control the inflammation process.
- Your child's urine may be tested for signs of kidney inflammation.
- HSP usually resolves after 4 to 6 weeks.
- HSP can re-occur in half of affected children within 12 months.
- In most cases no long-term problems are associated with HSP.



Discharge instructions

You will be discharged with advice given by your doctor.

You will be asked to make appointments to see your child's GP for regular blood pressure testing and follow-up urine checks.

If at any stage your child redevelops symptoms, develops new symptoms or becomes more unwell, make an appointment with your local doctor or take your child to the nearest emergency department.



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service

Child and Adolescent Health Service
15 Hospital Avenue, Nedlands, WA, 6009. Telephone:
(08) 6456 2222
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