

Home based care for febrile neutropenia

Information for parents and carers

What is febrile neutropenia?

Bacteria are normally present in our bodies but can sometimes cause infection in children having cancer treatment. Cancer treatment may result in low blood counts, and a higher chance of infection. A fever may be due to a simple virus, such as a 'cold virus' or may be due to a bacterial infection.

Your child is likely to develop a fever at some point during their treatment. We call this **febrile neutropenia** or **FN** for short.

Febrile = fever 38°C or higher, or low, less than 36°C.

Neutropenia = low neutrophils, a type of white blood cell.

How is febrile neutropenia treated?

The best way to treat FN is for your child to come into hospital and receive intravenous antibiotics (through a needle or tube inserted into a vein). They will be closely monitored in hospital and then discharged home with close follow up.

Children with FN can be put into different 'risk' groups, (very low, low, moderate, high) depending on their risk of serious infection, during each episode. Risk group will give us a guide as to how long your child should stay in hospital.

Shortening the amount of time people need to stay in hospital is particularly important, especially following the covid 19 pandemic. Because of this, the UK Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG) recommends that all UK centres now follow new guidance to make sure this is done in the safest way possible. If you would like to know more about this, you can visit the link or QR code below:

www.cclg.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Member%20area/COVID19/2020_CCLG_FN_program_-_Guidance-Protocol_FINAL.pdf



Completing treatment at home

The team here in Edinburgh will assess your child each time they have a fever and look at when it is safe to discharge them.

The length of time your child spends in hospital may vary from episode to episode. We will work closely with you by phone to monitor your child's progress.

We have a way to treat **low risk FN** safely at home with support from the hospital. This means your child can complete their antibiotics at home.

Eligibility for home treatment

Before we can discharge your child home, we need to ensure that:

- You have accommodation within 1 hours' drive of Royal Hospital for Children & Young People (RHCYP), Edinburgh
- You have immediate transport available (either car or ambulance) if you have to return to RHCYP, Edinburgh
- You have a working home phone or mobile phone
- You agree to the instructions of the haematology/oncology team.

When you are at home

When your child goes home, a member of the hospital team will call you daily until your child is well and has completed their antibiotics. You may be asked to stop giving the antibiotics even though you have some left.

While you are at home, you will need to take your child's temperature every 4 hours when they are awake until you are told you can stop by the hospital team.

Your child will be receiving antibiotics by mouth or through a nasogastric (NG) tube, if they have one. Please follow the instructions for giving these.

When to call the hospital

We expect your child to carry on having a fever for a while. It might take three or four days for it to settle completely. We will ask about it when we call you, but do not want you to worry just because you child gets hot.

You should contact the hospital team on **0131 312 1731** (24 hours per day/7 days per week) at any time if you are worried about your child or if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Does not feel well or look right to you
- Chills or shaking
- Persistent vomiting, new diarrhoea, not drinking
- Infection: redness, tenderness or pain anywhere on the body
- Tiredness, paleness or shortness of breath
- Dehydration: decreased urine, dry mouth
- Your child has a low temperature (below 36.0°C)
- Pain: severe or persistent.

Remember, you know your child best. If you are concerned or worried, or if something doesn't feel quite right, speak to your child's treating team.

In an emergency, call 999.

