

PATIENT INFORMATION: Dactylitis

Red blood cells are normally round and shaped like donuts. They are flexible and flow smoothly through small blood vessels in the body. They carry oxygen through the body.

Sickle cell disease causes red blood cells to be sickled in shape (like a banana). These sickled cells are sticky and stiff and can make it hard for blood to flow through the blood vessels. This slows the flow of oxygen to tissues in the body, causing pain, swelling, and eventual damage to blood vessels and organs in the body.

What is dactylitis?

As an infant, one of the first signs of the blocking of these blood vessels is called dactylitis. Dactylitis means pain and swelling in the hands and/or feet. In infants and young children, the smallest blood vessels in their bodies are in the hands and feet. These blood vessels are more likely to be blocked by sickle cells.



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What are the symptoms of dactylitis?

If your child has dactylitis, you will see swelling of his or her fingers and hands, or toes and feet. Some people refer to dactylitis as "hand-foot syndrome" or "sausage-digits." Your child may seem fussy and irritable. It may hurt when you touch your child's swollen hands and/or feet. You may also notice that his or her hands and or feet are warm to the touch and may even appear to be more red in color.

How is dactylitis treated?

Giving your child extra fluids and pain medications such as Tylenol® or ibuprofen can often help with the pain. If your child's pain worsens or your child develops a fever, you will have to come to the hospital for treatment. Your child may require stronger pain medications to be given at home or in the hospital.

Please always check your child's temperature before giving Tylenol or Ibuprofen. If your child is under 1 year old and has a temperature of 100.4°F or higher, he or she must be seen at the hospital for IV antibiotics. This is very important because your child is at high risk for getting a serious infection (blood infection).

It is important to know the correct dose of Tylenol for your child as well. Please call the Sickle Cell Team if you are unsure of the correct dose.

Rainbow Sickle Cell Anemia Center

If your child has signs or symptoms of illness, please call 216-844-3345 and follow the prompts.

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Have a question? Ask a Rainbow doctor. **216-UH4-KIDS** | **216-844-5437** | Rainbow.org/AngiesInstitute

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