

Physiotherapy Service Delivery Unit

How to Manage an Acute Joint or Muscle Bleed

This leaflet explains how to recognise and manage a bleed. If you have any further questions, please speak to the Haemophilia team.

Why is treating a bleed very important?

Prompt treatment of joint and muscle bleeds helps to prevent long term damage and potential deformity in later life. The aim of this information leaflet is to give you advice about what to do following a bleed into a joint or muscle, to reduce pain and swelling and prevent and minimise potential joint changes. Physiotherapy following a bleed will help get your muscles and joints moving again and speed up your recovery.

How do I recognise a bleed?

The most common symptoms of an acute bleed are a new onset of pain, heat, swelling and/or tightness, tingling together with difficulty moving the joint or limb and an inability to weight bear.

It is important to discuss a potential bleed with the haemophilia team.

How do I contact the Haemophilia team?

Please call: 020 8725 0763 (working hours: 8.30am to 5pm)

Out of hours service: Please contact switchboard on 020 8672 1255 to contact the On Call Haematology Registrar, bleep number 6068.

What do I do if I have a bleed?

The first and most important thing to do if you identify a bleed is to treat yourself with adequate factor replacement therapy as soon as you can. If you need advice about how much treatment to take contact the haemophilia team.

If you are registered with the HAEMTRACK system, please enter the information.

If you need physiotherapy advice or treatment please contact the team at:
haemophiliaphysio@stgeorges.nhs.uk

Start to follow this simple PRICE regime in the first 72 hours after detecting a bleed, using the advice given below.

- P** - Protection
- R** - Rest
- I** - Ice
- C** - Compression
- E** - Elevation

Protection

Reducing weight and stress on the affected joint or muscle by using crutches, a sling or other supports helps to manage the pain. You may need to avoid putting weight on the affected side completely for the first 24-48 hours.

Rest

The injured area should be rested in a comfortable position to allow the swelling to go down (this should take around 48 hours) and to prevent further bleeding. If the bleed is in the leg then crutches may be needed to keep the weight off it. The injured area should not be forced into any particular position but rested in the position that is most comfortable e.g. with the knee bent over a pillow.

Ice

Ice may help to reduce swelling and ease pain and muscle spasm. To make an ice pack at home, wrap a packet of frozen peas in a cold damp tea towel and place it over the area for 10-15 minutes. Repeat every two hours to be most effective. Ice can potentially burn the skin, so please be careful.

Compression

Controlling the swelling with compression can help manage the pain, however some people find compression uncomfortable. Tubular and elasticated bandages can be provided by the Haemophilia team. It is important that the bandage is not too tight and is large enough to cover the full area. Remove the bandage at night and check your skin regularly.

Elevation

Raising the injured area helps to reduce swelling and relieve pain by moving blood flow away from the injured area. For best results the injured area should be raised above the level of the heart and the compression bandage **should be removed** to allow normal circulation.

What do I do when the bleeding has stopped?

Bleeding usually stops within 24 to 48 hours if adequate factor replacement has been used. It is likely that the bleeding has stopped if you have less pain, more movement and the joint or muscle feels less tense. Once the bleeding has stopped then you can start to become more active:-

- If the bleed is in the leg or hip, begin putting weight through it and increase this within your limits of pain. You may need to use crutches for a few more days.
- Wear an elasticated support initially if you have one.
- Start moving the joint or muscle gently, trying to increase the movement daily.
- Start to contract the muscles in the affected area.
- **If you have pins and needles in the affected limb at any time you must contact the Haemophilia team immediately as this could be a potential sign of reduced blood supply to the nerves and muscles which requires urgent medical attention.**

It is a good idea to contact the Physiotherapist directly via email or by contacting the Haemophilia team so that they can give you advice on suitable exercises.

What physiotherapy will I need?

This will depend on your problem but will normally involve an individualised exercise program to help you recover quickly and return to your normal activity as soon as possible. This can involve outpatient appointments and access to the gymnasium or hydrotherapy pool if required.

We can send personalised exercises directly to you via our online exercise resource PHYSITRACK.

Useful sources of information

The Haemophilia Society: <https://haemophilia.org.uk/>

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching

'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk).

The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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