

Patient information

How to Manage an Acute Joint or Muscle Bleed

Clinical Haematology

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: 0151 706 3397 (working hours: 8.30am to 5pm).

Out of hours service: Please contact switchboard on 0151 706 2000 to contact the On Call Haematology Registrar or Consultant oncall for Haemophilia.

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 or if you have pins and needles in the affected area contact the haemophilia team. Avoid anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen etc.).

If you are registered with the HAEMTRACK system, please enter the information. 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 of 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. Check the skin regularly. 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 once 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. If this happens out of hours, go to your nearest Emergency Department.

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. Please contact the Haemophilia Centre who can help to arrange this for you.

Your Physiotherapist will give you a programme of suitable exercises. It is important that you do these as often as you are advised to, as this will help get your joints and muscles working properly again.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

If you have any further questions, please ask a member of our medical / nursing team. Please contact the Haemophilia Team
Available Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm
Tel: 0151 706 3397

Useful Websites

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

World Federation of Haemophilia:
www.wfh.org.

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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