

Coronavirus strategies for parents with sickle cell disease children from the perspective of two nurses with preteen children with SS sickle cell disease. By Bridget Desmukes and Jeffrey Desmukes Sr.

As parents of sickle cell disease children, it's hard enough trying to keep our kids safe and crisis-free, but with the onset of this new coronavirus threat here are some guidelines that will help to keep you and your children safe.

Let's start with the basics

Basics

1. **Make sure that your child is well hydrated.**

Keeping your child hydrated is crucial to the prevention of a sickle cell crisis. Proper hydration helps to prevent the clumping of red blood cells flowing through the body. It also helps to flush out any toxins in your child's body.

2. **Make sure your child is getting plenty of rest**

Rest for a sickle cell child is essential because their bodies are already working overtime and a lack of rest can trigger a pain crisis and weaken the immune system.

Coronavirus strategies

1. **Maintain a regular schedule;** maintaining a regular schedule prevents your child from becoming over-exhausted, which can trigger a pain crisis. Irregular schedules can cause them to have irregular sleep patterns, which can throw them into a crisis.
2. **Limit sweets:** The consumption of sweets suppresses (limits) the immune system (the body's natural defense).
3. **Practice proper handwashing:** When washing your hands, you should wash them vigorously for 20 sec making sure you scrub your nails, your palms and wash between your fingers front and back.
4. **Monitor your child's temperature:** Due to sickle cell and children's susceptibility to getting infections, monitoring temperature is essential. A fever is could be indication of a life-threatening infection.

What to do if you have to go out with your child

1. **Wear a face mask or facial covering:** Wearing a facemask can protect you and others. According to the CDC, the coronavirus is spread "through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks". The entry points for this virus is through your eyes nose and mouth.
 - The same way you spray air freshener and can see the vapors expand and travel in the air that is the same way the virus spreads when a person coughs, talks, or sneezes. The virus it still has residual particulates that linger in the air long after the person has left that area.
 - This means it can enter your eyes, nose, and mouth and other surfaces such as your hair, clothing, and inanimate (none living) objects.
 - If you don't have a face mask, using a Silk or polyester blend scarf as opposed to cotton as a face mask is more beneficial, due to the fact that silk

- and polyester have the ability to repel moisture, whereas Cotton fabrics, on the other hand, will trap and absorb moisture.
- Make sure both you and your child have a face mask and it covers both your mouth and your nose.
 - If you or your child wear glasses, you should wear them when going out. If you do not wear glasses you and your child should wear sunglasses or goggles, due to the fact that you are able to contract the virus through your eyes, nose, and mouth and these serve as barriers of protection.
2. **Have hand sanitizer with you:** Because this virus is spread through droplets the rule of thumb is to prevent any from entering into your body through your nose, mouth, eyes, or any open areas such as wounds and cracked dry skin.
- If you don't have any you can use 3 quarters of pure alcohol or rubbing alcohol as a substitute to one-quarter lotion.
 - Because Hand sanitizer can leave your hands dry and cracked make sure you wash your hands after every fifth use of hand sanitizer and apply lotion.
3. **Disinfect:** Anything you use while outside is considered contaminated including your clothes shoes and especially your face mask and it needs to be contained in a plastic bag before you enter your home.
- If you bring anything back home, you need to have a trash bag at the door where you can store it until you are able to clean it with bleach wipes
 - If you don't have bleach wipes you can make your own solution
 - In a spray bottle put one-quarter bleach, three or four drops dish soap and fill it up with warm water.
 - Have a designated washcloth or rag to use with that solution nearby.
 - After making the mixture shake it up spray it on the washcloth or rag and use it to wipe off any plastic bags, containers, or food items that are going to enter your home before you bring it in your home.
 - Make sure to take the fruits and vegetables out of the plastic bags and place them in a separate bowl and wash them before using them. Make sure to let them air dry.
 - Any grocery bags that are brought home from the store are considered contaminated so if you are not going to reuse them put them all in one and discard them in a separate section or place them outside for a few days if you can.
 - All boxes are considered contaminated. If you have no choice but to bring it into your home, make sure to clean the exterior as you would the plastic bags cleaning all of the sides making sure not to miss any area. If you are able to let it sit outside let it sit out for a few days at least a minimum of three before bringing it into your home.
4. **Immune system booster**
- Due to the fact that children with sickle cell have compromised immune systems here are some immune system boosters to implement on a regular base. You don't have to wait for them to get sick to do it.

Smoothies

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Ginger | 2. Pineapple |
| kale/spinach | Ginger |
| Garlic | Oats |
| Cucumber | Flaxseed |
| Apples (or mixed berries) | Cucumber |
| Celery | Banana |
| Honey | Honey |
| | Orange |

As a soup

Boil Ginger, garlic, onions and drink it with honey. This mixture also helps during the cold season to shorten the duration and severity of colds and cold-related symptoms.

Antibacterial and antifungals immune boosters

Echinacea
Elderberry

Lemon tea is good for cleansing the liver it also helps to detox the body of toxins that are often associated with poor cell regeneration.

Last, but not least. The most effective protective measure for you and your child is to stay home. if you do not have to go out don't go out.

In the words of Louis L. Armstrong -

"Knowledge is like money: to be of value it must circulate, and in circulating it can increase in quantity and, hopefully, in value".

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Till next time - Stay safe