



BI-LO Charities Children's Cancer Center

Suggested Accommodations for the Child with Sickle Cell Disease

Children with sickle cell disease have red blood cells that are shaped like sickles or crescent moons, as opposed to the disc shape of a normal red blood cell. This condition can cause painful episodes, serious infections, chronic anemia and damage to body organs, but most children are still able to live active, healthy lives.

This sheet provides some information about how this condition may affect a student's performance in the classroom and outlines some suggestions for helping these children.

Tips for School Personnel

Respect the family's wishes regarding disclosure of the child's illness to others. Some children want to share information with their friends about their sickle cell disease while others do not.

The child with sickle cell disease may experience frequent absences as a result of the illness. Be prepared to work with the student to help make up any missed assignments. The student may need extra tutoring in some subjects due to absences.

Conditions related to a student's sickle cell disease may interfere with his or her academic performance. Early identification of these deficiencies is essential so that appropriate testing and accommodations can be initiated.

Children with sickle cell disease may experience pain while at school. Many children live with chronic pain or experience acute episodes called crises. Discuss with the parents the process to follow if the child experiences pain at school, and allow the child to have full access to the school nurse for intervention.

A child with sickle cell disease may have anemia, in which the blood has a lower-than-normal number of red blood cells. Anemia can result in fatigue, which may be especially apparent at the end of the day. When possible, allow the student to rest for short periods of time during the day.

Children with sickle cell disease need to stay well hydrated. Please allow them to have a water bottle at their desk or unlimited access to the water fountain. Encourage them to drink water throughout the day.

The child with sickle cell disease will need unlimited bathroom privileges. Children with sickle cell disease are not able to concentrate their urine and, therefore, have to go to the bathroom more frequently. Increased water consumption also will lead to the need for increased urination.

Children with sickle cell disease may not have the stamina that other children do, so physical education activity may need to be modified. Strenuous activity may lead to fatigue and shortness of breath. Allow the child to limit his or her activity. Encourage the child to rest frequently.

Children with sickle cell disease are sensitive to extreme temperatures. Make sure the child dresses appropriately for outdoor activities.