Henoch-Schonlein Purpura - (HSP)

HSP is a disease that involves inflammation of the small blood vessels. It causes damage to the vessels and sometimes to the organs in the body that these blood vessels supply. No one knows for sure what causes this disease. Some doctors believe that it happens after a viral infection, such as the flu. There is no sure way to diagnose this disease. Even if your child has had no x-rays or lab tests, you may still be told that your child has HSP. This disease is not contagious (catching).

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- **Purple rash (palpable purpura)** - This raised purple rash is *palpable*, which means you can feel it with your fingers. It usually appears on the legs and buttocks. You might also see it in other areas such as the face and stomach. This rash usually goes away in about a week, but sometimes it can last as long as one month.

- **Abdominal pain** - This pain around the belly button tends to come and go. Most often, it will go away on its own. But if the pain is constant or severe, it could mean a more serious problem called *intussusception*.

Picture 1 Go **immediately** to the emergency department if your child has signs of intussusception.

With intussusception, a part of the child's intestine twists around into a kind of "knot." If this is happening, your child will have abdominal pain that comes in waves. Your child will be unable to move without pain. There may also be vomiting, blood in the stool, or behavior changes such as listlessness. **If your child has these symptoms, it is a medical emergency. Go to the emergency department immediately.**

- **Arthritis** - soreness and swelling in the joints, usually the knees and ankles. It tends to move around from one area to another.

- **Swelling (edema) around the joints** - The swelling sometimes can be severe enough that your child may have trouble walking. Smaller children may have swelling of the face and hands. Very rarely a child will have swelling in the genital area. If your child has swelling of the genitals, call your doctor.

- **Kidney problems** - Only a very small number of children with HSP end up with kidney problems. It is important to follow up with your doctor to make sure these problems do not develop. Also, if your child had a urine test that showed possible kidney involvement, you will need to follow up with your child's doctor. The doctor will check your child's blood pressures and do more urine tests.

For about two-thirds of children, all symptoms will be gone in two to four weeks. For the last one-third of children, symptoms are gone in one to three months. Serious complications of HSP are rare, but it is very important to follow up with your child's doctor.

TREATMENT

Most of the treatment of HSP is aimed at making sure the child has enough fluids to drink and giving them something for the pain they might be having.

- Most often we advise parents to give their children acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain. We usually do not recommend Advil or Motrin because of possible complications. Please follow the instructions carefully on the Tylenol label.

- If your child has severe pain in the joints or severe abdominal pain, a medicine called a *corticosteroid* may be prescribed. This medicine may shorten the time that your child has symptoms. However, not all doctors agree that this is a useful treatment for the symptoms of HSP.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE

Go to your doctor or return to the Emergency Department IMMEDIATELY if your child has:

- **Blood** in the stool, vomit, or urine
- **Abdominal pain that does not improve** or seems to be getting worse, especially if it is comes in "waves" and makes your child unable to move
- **Signs of dehydration** such as: no tears when crying, decrease in urination, dry mouth or lips, sunken eyes
- **Urine that is tea-colored** or looks like Coca Cola
- **Swelling** in the **genital area**
- Headache, blurry vision, or changes in behavior
- Heavy or labored breathing
- Any new symptoms that concern you

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your child's doctor or nurse.