



Web Site: <http://evans.carson.amedd.army.mil/Peds/index.htm>

PEDIATRIC CLINIC PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

Bacteremia

Description

When bacteria are growing in your child's bloodstream, the condition is called bacteremia. Bacteremia causes a fever but no other specific symptoms. This illness usually occurs in children less than 3 years old. It is most common in babies.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of bacteremia is made from a blood test. This test requires 24 to 48 hours to show the presence of bacteria in the bloodstream. For this reason, your child will be given a diagnosis of "rule-out," or "suspected," bacteremia. A more specific diagnosis cannot be made until the test results are back.

If your child is not seriously ill, he or she will be sent home. Your child will be treated and possibly prescribed medication before going home. Children who appear to be seriously ill will need to stay in the hospital for close observation and treatment.

Home Care

1. Antibiotics

Bacterial infections can be treated effectively with antibiotics. All children suspected of having bacteremia are treated with antibiotics.

Your child will receive a shot or intravenous (IV) dose of an antibiotic called ceftriaxone.

The doctor may also prescribe your child an oral antibiotic.

2. Fluids

Fever increases your child's fluid needs. Encourage your child to drink lots of fluids, even though he or she may not want to drink because of feeling ill.

3. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen

For fever over 102 degrees F (38.5 degrees C), give acetaminophen every 4 hours or ibuprofen every 6 to 8 hours.

Follow-Up

Your child should improve (have less fever and be more active) within 24 to 48 hours. Children who go home with a diagnosis of "rule-out" or "suspected" bacteremia require a follow-up appointment with a physician within 24 hours. Your child must be seen again for a repeat physical exam, to have the blood test results checked, and possibly to receive further antibiotic treatment.

Call Your Child's Physician IMMEDIATELY If:

(1-888-887-4111 after hours)

- Your child starts to act very sick or is difficult to awaken.
- Your child develops a stiff neck or swollen joints (these are serious complications of bacteremia).
- Your child is unable to drink or keep down fluids.
- Your child develops a rash or difficulty breathing.

Call Your Child's Physician During Office Hours If:

(526-7653 during duty hours)

- You have other questions or concerns.