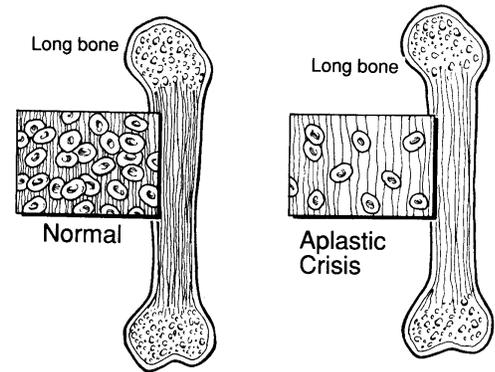


Aplastic Crisis

WHAT IS AN APLASTIC CRISIS?

Red blood cells are made inside bones (bone marrow). An aplastic crisis is an infection caused by parvovirus B19. It causes production of red blood cells (RBCs) in the marrow to be shut down for up to 10 days. This means that RBCs are not being made during this period. Because the RBCs in children with sickle cell anemia live only 10-15 days (compared to 120 days in children who do not have sickle cell anemia), the blood count (hemoglobin & hematocrit) drops rapidly to dangerously low levels during the infection.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Paleness
- Lethargy
- "Not feeling good"
- Headache
- Fever
- Anemia (low blood count)
- Recent upper respiratory infection
- Passing out (fainting)



WHO GETS AN APLASTIC CRISIS?

An aplastic crisis usually occurs in children under the age of 16 years. It occurs in the general population, but can only be noticed in those people with chronic anemias (such as sickle cell anemia).

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Most often a blood transfusion is given to raise your child's blood count until the body starts making its own RBCs again. Occasionally it is necessary to hospitalize a child during an aplastic crisis.

CAN AN APLASTIC CRISIS HAPPEN MORE THAN ONCE?

No, recurrences of aplastic crisis are rare. Once affected, immunity to parvovirus is usually lifelong.

WHAT TYPE OF FOLLOW-UP IS REQUIRED?

Your child will be given a follow-up appointment to check the blood count to make sure his or her body is producing RBCs again and to make sure the blood count is back to normal. Usually just one or two extra visits are needed. If there is another child in the household with sickle cell anemia, he or she should also have a blood count since they may have an aplastic crisis too. Parvovirus is usually very contagious to those who have never had it.