

Information for patients , parents or carers

Supraventricular tachycardia (SVT)

Your child has been diagnosed with a condition known as a super ventricular tachycardia, we have produced this leaflet to help explain SVT, the symptoms, day to day life and where to get help if you need it.

What is SVT?

The heart has an electrical system that control our heart rate, SVT happens when there is a fault in this system. The cause of SVT is due to an additional electrical pathway that has developed in the heart; this additional pathway forms as a baby develops in the womb. Even though this is usually present from birth, the first episode of SVT may occur at any age, including teenage years and adulthood. This additional pathway causes the heart to beat extremely fast, often at around 200 beats per minute. Some children feel unwell or well with it, but others feel the affects more severely.

What are the signs and symptoms?

In babies if SVT goes on for a long time your baby's heart muscle can get tired causing the heart not to pump as efficiently. This can make your baby appear pale, mottled, breathless, and make it hard for them to feed. In older children they will usually be aware of their heart beating faster. If it goes on for a while it will make them feel weak, breathless, light headed. They may also experience chest pain, or make them feel nauseous or vomit. If your child has any other these signs or symptoms please seek medical help immediately by calling 999 or 111.

Medication

During your child's admission to the ward they will have been given medication to reduce the chances of them going into SVT. Nursing staff will tell you how to give your child's medicines before they leave hospital, and will give demonstrations if necessary. It is important that you have a thorough understanding of how your child's medication needs to be given, including the required doses and timing, please ask if you are unsure.

You will be provided with a four-week supply from the hospital. Further supplies will be prescribed by your GP unless you are told otherwise. We would strongly advise you to obtain a prescription from your local G.P. as soon as possible after discharge in order to allow the local pharmacist time to obtain the correct medicines for your child. It is essential to continue your child's medication until told otherwise by their cardiologist.

Going home

In preparation for going home we will show you how to check your child's heart rate by either taking their pulse or listening into their heartbeat with a stethoscope (a device that is used to listen into your child's heartbeat). The ward will give you with a stethoscope to take with you. If for any reason you need a replacement, please contact the cardiac specialist nurses or ward 23 and they will be able to help.

We recommend that you take this stethoscope out an about with you on a daily basis, so you have it at hand in case you are concerned. You should listen with the stethoscope a couple of times a day, however if you are worried, they are showing any of the symptoms discussed above or you feel they don't seem themselves then please listen in with the stethoscope or take their pulse.

If they are in SVT when you listen in, please ring 999 for an ambulance, inform the operator of their condition. They will then guide from there, your child will then be taken to your nearest accident and emergency. They will then contact the on-call cardiologist for further advice or to request a transfer to the Freeman Hospital.

Follow-up

Most children are reviewed by their cardiologist in an outpatient clinic around four to six weeks after leaving the hospital. When seen in clinic this will involve an ECG as well as other possible examinations for example an echo, as well as reviewing their regular medications. If you do not receive an appointment before you leave the hospital or in the post soon after going home then please contact the cardiac specialist nurses or Ward 23.

For most babies SVT goes away within the first year of life and will require no further treatment or follow-up. When your child is one-year old, your consultant will stop their medication, if there are no episodes of SVT within three months, they will discharge them from the service. If they do have an episode of SVT they will restart their medication and continue to have regular outpatient follow up until they are around 15kg (around school age) they will then be offered a cardiac ablation. Catheter ablation is a treatment that aims to control or correct certain types of abnormal heart rhythms. It uses either heat (radiofrequency ablation) or freezing (cryoablation) on an area of the heart that is causing the abnormal heart rhythm. This treatment creates scar tissue, which breaks abnormal circuits in the heart or destroys areas of the heart muscle, which are triggering SVT. Your consultant cardiologist or the cardiac specialist nurses will be able to discuss this with you further if you have any further questions.

Most children with SVT will remain completely well and lead a normal, active life after treatment. There is no need to restrict your child's physical activity and no special precautions are necessary. As your child grows up, they might find that SVT can be made worse by caffeine (found in coffee and soft drinks), excess alcohol and by stimulants.

Contact numbers

Ward 23: 0191 213 7023 (24 hours)

Children's Cardiac Rhythm and ICC Nurse Specialist;

Faye Pugh 0191 213 9633

Children's Cardiac Specialist Nurses: 0191 213 7344

The cardiac nurse specialists are around 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. If there is no answer please leave a voicemail, and they will endeavour to return your call within 24 hours. If urgent, please contact ward 23 for advice.

Email for cardiac specialist nurses; nuth.ccns@nhs.net

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can offer on-the-spot advice and information about the NHS. You can contact them on freephone 0800 032 02 02 or email pals@nhct.nhs.uk.
<https://www.northumbria.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/share-your-feedback/patient-and-advice-liaison-service-pals#9882d87e>

Useful websites

If you would like further information about health conditions and treatment options, you may wish to look at the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk. On this website there is an information prescription generator www.nhs.uk/ips which brings together a wealth of approved patient information from the NHS and charity partners which you may find helpful.

You may also want to look at <https://www.chuf.org.uk/>

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