

Complications: Acute Chest Syndrome

What is acute chest syndrome?

Acute chest syndrome is a very serious complication of sickle cell disease. It is the combination of an infection causing pneumonia and red blood cells sickling that causes damage due to reduced blood flow in the lungs.

What causes acute chest syndrome?

Acute chest syndrome can be caused by bacterial or viral infections. It can also be caused by sickled red blood cells blocking the blood vessels in the lungs.

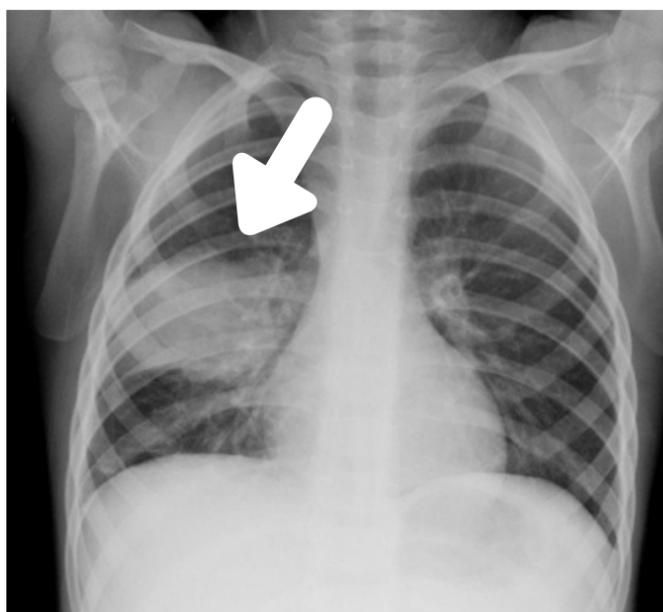
What are the signs and symptoms?

Children with acute chest syndrome have fever and respiratory symptoms such as:

- Runny nose
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing or wheezing
- Cough
- Fast breathing

What should I do if my child has symptoms of acute chest syndrome?

Acute chest syndrome is a medical emergency. Some children with acute chest syndrome become sick very quickly. **If your child has a fever, difficulty breathing or any of the other signs and symptoms you should seek care in an emergency room immediately.** In the emergency room, your child will need blood tests and a chest x-ray.



A chest X-ray may be performed to look for the white patches or infiltrates in the lung tissue that occur with acute chest syndrome.

How is acute chest syndrome treated?

Your child will be admitted to the hospital for treatment with I.V. fluids and antibiotics. If needed, your child may also be given pain medication, oxygen or a blood transfusion. Some children will need additional medications to assist with breathing.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF ACUTE CHEST SYNDROME:

- Fever
- Cough and runny nose
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing or wheezing

If your child has any of the above symptoms, seek care and call the sickle cell nurse or doctor:

312-227-4813 (M-F 9am to 5pm)

312-227-4000 (After hours, ask for hematologist on call)

The Comprehensive Sickle Cell Program

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