Patient Information

Blood monitoring for paediatric rheumatology

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about your child's rheumatology blood tests and details of how to access a video to watch with your child.

Why does my child need regular blood tests?

Blood tests are not something any parent wants for their child but they are needed to make sure that the medication your child is taking is working safely to control their condition without any adverse (harmful) side effects.

Ways to make blood tests easier

Many children surprise us and are great at having their bloods taken, others are not so keen!

Local anaesthetic creams or cold spray can be used to ease any discomfort. These can be requested from the hospital or your child's GP and would need to be applied before the blood test is taken.

You can view videos provided by the 'What? Why? Children in Hospital charity'. These can be really helpful when explaining, to your child, what is going to happen.

Please visit: www.whatwhychildreninhospital.org.uk/videos

When does my child need to have these tests?

We ask that you please take responsibility for arranging the blood tests. New medication prescriptions will not be issued by our team or your GP without up-to-date blood test results. Your child's Paediatric Rheumatology Nurse will be able to tell you where to get the blood request forms and where your child's blood tests can be done.

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Generally, blood tests will need to be taken monthly for the 3 months after the child has started their new medication. If the results are good then future blood tests will only be taken every 3 months.

You may have been advised to follow a different routine for having your child's blood tested, if so, please follow the guidance given by your child's medical team.

The first 3 months of monitoring should be arranged for the following weeks.

Month 1: _________________

Month 2: _________________

Month 3: _________________

What will you be testing for?

There are 3 standard tests that we monitor to ensure your child's medication is working safely to control their condition. These are all measured against a 'normal' range for your child's age.

Abnormalities in these results do not always mean a problem.

Your child may have other blood tests carried out at the same time; usually these can be done without taking any extra blood.

- The first test is called **FBC** (full blood count) which looks at the health of the white cells and red cells. We monitor these to make sure that the medication is not preventing the blood cells from working normally or affecting the number of new cells being made.
- The second test is called **LFT** (liver function test) and looks at the liver enzyme (ALT), to show how well the liver is working.
- The third test is **U&Es** (urea and electrolytes) which shows how well the kidneys are working.

If there is a need for follow-up action you will be informed by your child's GP or the Paediatric Rheumatology Team. This may mean that your child might need to miss a dose of medicine, stop or change treatment or just have the blood test repeated.

Please do not worry if this happens. We monitor regularly to make sure that we pick up any concerns early.

Contact information

Paediatric Rheumatology Nurse Specialist
Tel: 07580 931 230
Monday to Wednesday, 9:00am to 5:00pm

For urgent enquiries outside of these hours please contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice.

Further information

What? Why? Children in Hospital
Website: www.whatwhychildreninhospital.org.uk/

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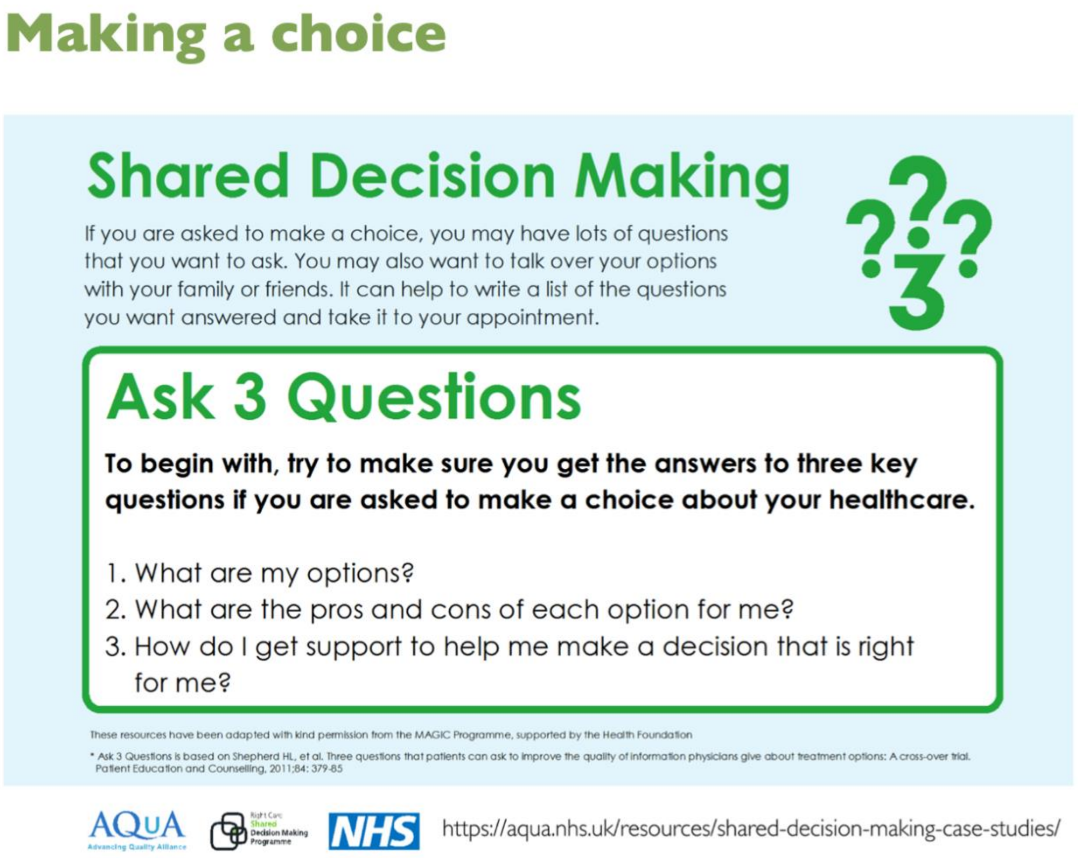

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85

https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/