

# Understanding my child's bruising and bleeding: Immune Thrombocytopenia (ITP)

## Children's Haematology

Information for Patients

Produced: June 2025

Review: June 2028

Leaflet number: 1630 Version: 1

### What is ITP?

ITP is a condition where there are fewer platelet cells in the blood because the immune system destroys them. Platelets help to stop bleeding. If you have less platelets then your body will bruise and bleed more easily.

It happens in 4 in 100,000 children each year.

### What are platelets?

Platelets help to stop bruising and bleeding after an injury.

Children with ITP have a platelet count of less than 100. This should normally be 140 to 400.

### What are the signs of ITP?

- Small pinprick spots (petechiae) may develop anywhere on the body.
- Bruises can appear after very minor bumps or injury.
- Nose bleeds.
- Bleeding gums can happen without any reason or after brushing teeth.

### What causes ITP?

The exact cause of ITP is often unknown. ITP happens when the body's immune system destroys platelets. This happens after a viral infection. The body's immune system is working to fight off and recover from an infection and causes the body to attack its own platelet cells. It can also happen from an allergic reaction of some kind.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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## How long will ITP last?

- Many children improve within 6 weeks.
- 3 out of 4 children will get better by 6 months after ITP starts.
- Some children do not get completely better. But their platelet count improves which causes fewer bleeding problems.
- If ITP lasts more than 6 months, 1 out of 4 of children will fully recover over the next year. Over half will recover over several years.
- After ITP goes away, about 1 in 20 children might get ITP again in the future.

## What happens next?

- Your child should have a repeat blood test booked for 1 week's time after you leave the emergency department.
- If platelet counts are less than 20, your child will have a blood test once a week for 4 weeks. Your child will have a clinic appointment with a general paediatrician at the hospital in 6 to 8 weeks.
- The haematology nurses will call you with your child's blood results and will make the next plan with you.
- If you do not get a follow up clinic appointment, please contact the haematology nurses on the last page of this leaflet.

## What activities can my child do?

- Children should continue normal activities and go back to school. **They should not** play contact sports like rugby.
- If your child's platelet count is very low, your child might need to avoid all sports until it gets better. We advise this if platelets are below 10.
- Your child should take precautions like wearing a helmet when riding a scooter or bike or roller skates.
- Your child should avoid sports where there is a risk of a head injury/neck injury like paintballing, karate, football. This is if platelets below 50.

## What should my child avoid?

- Do not take any intramuscular injections if platelet level is below 30.
- Do not take ibuprofen and pain relief medications (NSAID's) for pain relief or temperatures. These reduce platelet count. Calpol is fine to use.

## What is the treatment for ITP?

- ITP does not need treatment in most cases. We watch and wait to see if it can get better on its own.
- Steroids. You can take them by mouth for 4 days. We give this during bad bleeding episodes.
- Immunoglobulins. These are antibodies that help stop platelets from being destroyed and can raise the platelet count. The effects last about 4 weeks. This treatment needs a hospital stay and is given through a small tube into a vein.
- If your child's ITP lasts more than 6 months, we can look at other treatments.

## When to contact the haematology nurses or the hospital?

You should call us when your child has:

- A long nose bleed (30 minutes long)
- Lasting gum bleeding
- Blood in pee or poo
- Blood blisters in the mouth
- Bad or lasting headaches
- Head injuries: If there's a heavy blow to the head, go to the emergency department at the hospital right away. For a smaller bump that causes bruising, use a cold pack. If there is any loss of consciousness, drowsiness, headaches, or vomiting, go to the emergency department.
- If any serious bleeding, please go to the emergency department.



### Next blood test appointment details

**Date:** .....

**Time:** .....

**Address:** **Childrens Daycare Unit,  
Level 4, Windsor Building,  
Leicester Royal Infirmary**

### Contact number for the haematology nurses (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

07866 833945 and 07866 002304

### Useful website

<https://support.org.uk>: Excellent information for schools and playgroups.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
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