

The image features two hands, one yellow and one orange, cupping a red heart. The background is a gradient of orange and yellow with a dotted pattern on the left side.

Rheumatic Heart Disease Calendar

SUPPORT RESOURCE FOR
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



DON'T MISS OUT ON
THE THINGS YOU LOVE.

If you have rheumatic fever or rheumatic heart disease,
you need a penicillin needle every 21-28 days.

Miss one needle and you could miss out on a whole lot more.



Government
of South Australia

SA Health



INTRODUCTION

This support resource is to be used together with the SA Health Rheumatic Heart Disease Calendar.

The Rheumatic Heart Disease Calendar can also be used as a flip chart for educating your patients and their families about rheumatic fever, rheumatic heart disease and the importance of regular penicillin injections.

This support resource will guide you through what to say to patients and their families. It outlines what each page of the calendar focuses on, and suggests topics to discuss for each month.

The calendar is designed to be interactive and encourage your patient and their family to think about why protecting their heart is important to them – what is it in life that they don't want to miss out on? You can write these reasons on the last page and the patient can take the calendar home.

The other information you can write on the calendar is when they are due to finish their needles – this will usually be in the cardiology letter. If it's not, you can confirm with us what the date should be.

The stickers are for use on the calendar. The yellow heart is to indicate when the next needle is due and the green sticker is to put on the calendar when they have had their needle. You can either ask the patient to put the stickers on themselves, or get them to bring the calendar back in to the clinic each time so you can do it together.

All the information in these notes is based on best practice guidelines as per the Australian guideline for prevention, diagnosis and management of acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease (2nd edition) 2012. For more information visit www.rhdaustralia.org.au.

Thank you again to all of you for your help with this important resource. We hope that you find it a valuable tool to educate your patients.

SA Rheumatic Heart Disease Control Program



**DON'T MISS OUT ON
THE THINGS YOU LOVE.**

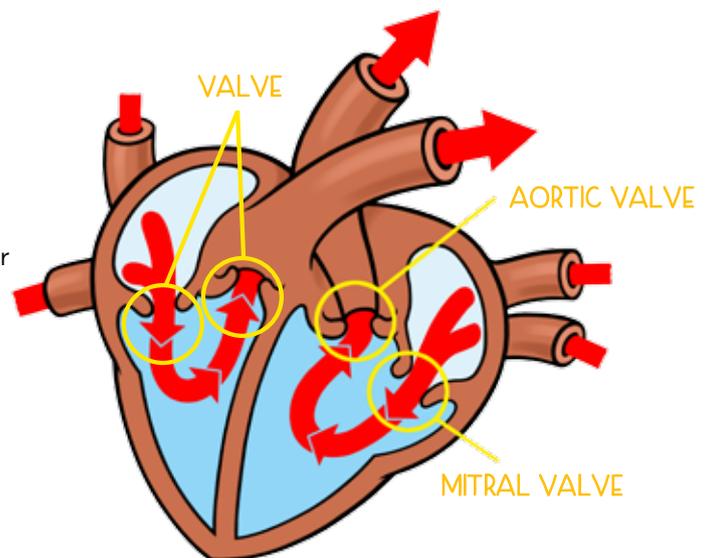
JANUARY - THE HEART AND HOW IT WORKS

This page is to give your patients/their families a very simple explanation of how the heart works and that it's the valves that make the blood flow in the right direction in the heart.

Message for patients

Your heart is a muscle made up of four different sections. These sections are connected by four valves. These valves act like one way doors making sure the blood moves through your heart in the right direction. The two valves most commonly affected by rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease are on the left side of the heart. These are called the mitral valve and the aortic valve.

Blood from the heart needs to be pumped all around your body so it's very important that these doors (valves) are working properly so that blood reaches your whole body.



FEBRUARY - WHAT IS RHEUMATIC FEVER?

This page explains that rheumatic fever is caused by bacteria called strep. Patients/their families need to know that it is a germ that causes rheumatic fever and makes their heart sick. This germ can cause sore throats or get into infected skin sores so if they have either of these, they need to go to the clinic to get treatment.

Message for patients

Rheumatic fever is a sickness caused by a germ called Streptococcus, also known as 'strep'.

Strep likes to set up camp and live in your throat or in sores you have on your skin. Some people can get a sore throat from the strep germ.

Strep spreads easily between people when they cough and sneeze. It also spreads very easily when there are a lot of people living in a house together. This can be prevented by using tissues, washing hands and keeping the house clean.

Sometimes after a sore throat the strep germ can affect the whole body, especially the big joints and the heart. This is called rheumatic fever.

If you get a sore throat or have skin sores it is very important to go to the clinic for treatment as soon as possible so that you don't get rheumatic fever later.

MARCH - WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF RHEUMATIC FEVER?

This page explains what the signs of rheumatic fever are. If rheumatic fever is picked up in time, treatment can start early which may prevent further damage to the heart. The community needs to know what to look out for so they can get themselves/their family to the clinic straight away.



Message for patients

Rheumatic fever can affect different parts of the body, and can affect people in different ways.

- > Painful or swollen joints (like ankle, knees, hip or elbow, wrist, shoulder).
- > Fever (feeling cold and shivering but when you feel someone's forehead they feel very hot to touch).
- > Twitching or jerky movements or difficulty walking.

Rheumatic fever can also affect the valves of the heart but you may not notice anything.

You can get rheumatic fever more than once so if you have any of these signs, go to the clinic and ask to see your doctor, nurse or health worker.

APRIL - WHAT IS RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE?

This page describes what rheumatic heart disease is and that it can make someone very sick. Rheumatic heart disease is serious. People will feel very unwell if they have severe rheumatic heart disease. Some of these people will have to have surgery and in the worst case scenario it can cause death.

Message for patients

Rheumatic heart disease is when the heart has become damaged after one or more episodes of rheumatic fever.

The valves of the heart (the doors) are stretched and scarred so that they stop working properly. This means the blood doesn't flow the way it should and this can make it hard for your heart to keep you going and to keep you strong.

Rheumatic heart disease affects everyone differently. It can cause some people to be tired, feel out of breath or make it harder to exercise. Some people will have worse damage to the heart than others and may experience all these things.

Some people will need to have surgery on their heart if the damage is very bad while others will need to go on long term medication.

MAY - RHEUMATIC FEVER CAN COME BACK AGAIN

This page is to explain that rheumatic fever can come back and make the damage to the heart worse. The patients/their families need to know that if rheumatic fever comes back the damage to their heart can get worse. This helps them understand why the penicillin needles are so important. It's because they prevent rheumatic fever from happening again.

Message for patients

Rheumatic fever can happen again and again.

Every time you have rheumatic fever, your heart gets weaker and weaker and doesn't work properly.

Once you have had rheumatic fever or rheumatic heart disease you need to do everything you can to stop the strep germ from coming back.

JUNE - STAY HEALTHY WITH REGULAR NEEDLES

This page explains that the strep germ can be killed by having a special type of penicillin in their body all the time. The penicillin needles are protecting their heart, but only if they have the penicillin in their body all the time. That's why they need the needles regularly.

Message for patients

The good news is that the strep germ can be killed with medicine called penicillin.

This medicine is given by a needle and it protects you for 28 days.

It goes all around your body and protects you from the 'strep' germ.

It's the same as having to fill up the car with petrol once it's run out. If you don't re-fill it with petrol the car won't go anymore. It's the same with the injections, the medicine runs out after 28 days and you need to have another injection to top it up.

Even if you are feeling good you still need to have your needle to protect your heart.



JULY - YOU NEED NEEDLES EVERY FEW WEEKS

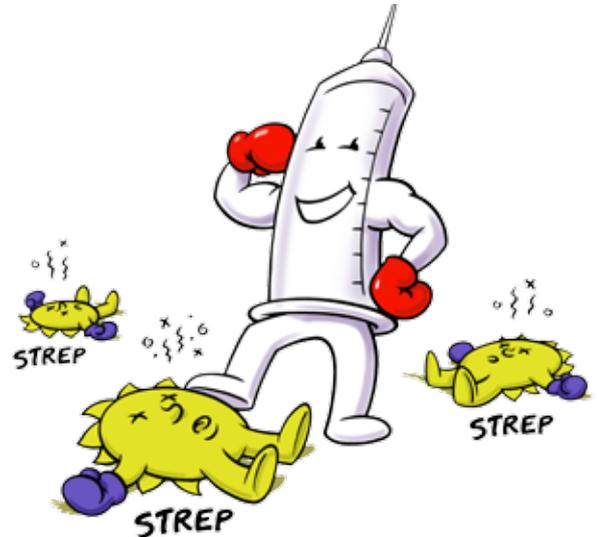
This page explains the importance of having the next needle by day 28. If they haven't had their next needle by day 28 then they are at risk of getting rheumatic fever again and therefore more damage to their heart.

Message for patients

People with rheumatic fever need penicillin in their body all the time to kill any strep germs and prevent heart damage.

You will need a needle every 21-28 days to protect your heart so you can stay strong and do all the things you love doing.

Day 28 is the last possible day to have your next needle. Your health service will remind you when your needle is due. You can put a sticker on this calendar showing when the next needle is due to help you remember.



AUGUST - THE NEEDLES DON'T HAVE TO BE FOREVER

This page explains that the needles are generally for a long time and that some people are on them for longer than others. This is a chance to make the calendar personalised for your patient/their family. It may help the patients/their families to know how long they need to have the needles for, and to know that they will stop one day. You can find out when they are due to stop the needles by looking at their doctor's letter.

Message for patients

Most people will be put on these needles for around 10 years but this depends on how old you were when you had rheumatic fever.

Your doctor has said you can stop your needles when you are ___ years old.

If you have all of your needles from the beginning, you will most likely be able to stop then. If you miss some of your needles, you might need to be on them for longer than this.

Even if you're pregnant, you still need to continue having your needles throughout the pregnancy.

If you find them painful, talk to us about how we can help reduce the pain.

Remember: If you have all your needles on time, you won't get crook again with rheumatic fever.

SEPTEMBER - OTHER APPOINTMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TOO

This page explains the other appointments that are needed when someone has a diagnosis of rheumatic fever or rheumatic heart disease. These other appointments are very important to attend. The doctor needs to monitor any changes to the heart and the dentist will make sure the patient has good oral health.

Message for patients

As well as your regular needle, you will also have other appointments that are an important part of your care. These include seeing the heart doctor and having an ultrasound of your heart, called an echo. It is important to go to these appointments so your doctor can check how your heart is going.

It is also very important to look after your oral health and avoid any infections by brushing your teeth every day and having regular checks with the dentist.

OCTOBER - WHEN TO GO TO THE DOCTOR

This page is a reminder about when patients should go to the clinic. Early treatment of the strep infection and accurate diagnosis of rheumatic fever is very important. Patients/their families need to know that they should go to clinic straight away if they have any signs of a strep germ infection or rheumatic fever.

Message for patients

It is really important that you and your family know what to look out for in case someone is sick with rheumatic fever or in case they have an infection with the strep germ.

Remember rheumatic fever can come back again, so it's even more important to know what to look out for.

> Sore throat > Skin sores > Sore joints > Fever.

If you or a family member have any of these signs, go to the clinic and speak to a doctor, nurse or health worker.

SKIN SORES / SORE THROAT



JOINT PAIN



FEVER



NOVEMBER - THINGS TO REMEMBER

This page is a chance to remind your patients about the need to have their injections every 28 days. Having their needle every 28 days is going to protect their heart and keep it strong.

Message for patients

To keep your heart going strong you need to keep the strep germ away and prevent rheumatic fever by having your needle every 21-28 days.

Or, remind your family member to have their needle every 21-28 days.

The stickers can be used to remind you when your next needle is due.



DECEMBER - WHY SHOULD I GET MY NEEDLES?

This page is for your patient to write their own reason for wanting to keep their heart strong. By having their regular injections they won't miss out on the things they love.

Message for patients

Ask the patient what their reasons are for wanting to look after their heart and keep it strong.

Ask them to think of things that they don't want to miss out on in life and write them on the calendar.

For more information

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