

## **Transient Erythroblastopenia of Childhood**

### **What is Transient Erythroblastopenia of Childhood (TEC)?**

TEC is a form of anemia (low red cell count) that occurs in previously healthy young children, typically 6 months - 3 years of age. The anemia results from temporary absence of red blood cell production by the bone marrow, and usually resolves without treatment (except for a blood transfusion in some cases). TEC is not a serious or life-long problem.

### **How is TEC diagnosed?**

Most children with TEC appear healthy, and the anemia is found on a CBC (blood count) performed for another purpose e.g. a fever, or because the child is pale, fatigued and sleeping more than usual. The CBC shows moderately severe anemia (hemoglobin 4-8 gm/dl, normal 11g/dL), and the reticulocyte count which indicates how well new red cells are being made is very low (less than 1%). The rest of the blood count, including white blood cell count and platelets are usually normal.

### **What causes TEC?**

Children with TEC have anemia as result of decreased production of red blood cells by the bone marrow. The cause for this is not known, but there may be a history of virus infection of some sort several months earlier, although it is unclear how this might cause TEC.

### **What is the outcome for TEC?**

Fortunately, TEC gets better by itself and within a few weeks, the suppression of red blood cell production in the bone marrow ceases, the reticulocyte count rises, and the hemoglobin increases steadily to normal, along with resolution of the symptoms of anemia. There is no specific treatment for TEC and vitamins, hormones, and special diets are of no value. Some children whose hemoglobin drops very low may require a single transfusion of red blood cells to give them a “boost” until they resume red blood cell production on their own.

After TEC is diagnosed in your child, he or she should have a blood count performed weekly until there are signs of recovery and as the child begins to recover, blood counts can be performed less frequently until it is documented that they have returned to normal. Children with TEC always make a full recovery within several months, and once counts normalize there is no need for further blood counts out of concern that this condition will “turn into” some other blood disorder.