What is a breath-holding attack?
Breath-holding attacks are a common problem, affecting up to one in twenty children. A breath-holding attack may happen after a child has a minor accident, has a fright or gets upset. The child will then cry and hold their breath.

If children start to cry after a little injury or tantrum, lose their breath and turn red in the face, followed by turning blue (especially around the mouth), it is known as a blue spell. The child may faint and go limp. The attack lasts only a short time and the child often feels tired and confused afterwards. A child may have a fit after a blue spell, but this is rare.

What causes breath-holding attacks?
The cause of breath-holding attacks is not known. Most children that go through a stage of breath-holding do not have a serious problem and are not epileptic. Sometimes there is a family history of similar attacks.

When do they start and will they stop?
Breath-holding attacks usually start before 18 months of age and usually stop by six years. Some children with pale spells may have faints as they grow older.

How often do they occur?
Attacks may happen fairly often, however, every child is different. Watch your child to understand when they are most likely to have an attack. This will help you know when they are going to have an attack.

What needs to be done for my child?
Although at first breath-holding attacks appear scary, you will become used to them. Discuss the problem with your doctor. Your child will need a careful examination to see that they do not have any other problems. Children with breath-holding are usually otherwise healthy.

What can be done in the meantime?
No special treatment is required. Anti-epileptic treatment is not effective and is not recommended. If your child has a lot of tantrums, a behaviour modification program may help, but will not stop the breath-holding. Talk with the Doctor when you are seen.

Remember
- Children commonly hold their breath after a fright or becoming upset.
- Children may appear drowsy and sleep for a while after an attack.
- Children with breath-holding don't usually have a serious underlying illness.

Please feel free to ask
If you have any questions or queries which we have not covered in this leaflet the staff will be pleased to answer your questions as clearly and honestly as they can.

Rainbow Ward ,Tel. No: 01942 778762 or 778763, Ward open 24 hours
Please note that we can only give specific advice where we have recently been involved in the care of a child.
Research
Research is undertaken to add to the existing scientific knowledge on a particular subject. There are a number of staff within the Trust who conduct Research studies. It is possible that during the course of your treatment you may be asked to take part in a research study, however, you do have the right to refuse, and this will not affect the care that you receive.

Your NHS Number, Keep it Safe
Every person registered with the NHS in England and Wales has their own unique NHS Number. It is made up of 10 digits for example 123 456 7890.

Everyone needs to use the NHS Number to identify you correctly. It is an important step towards improving the safety of your healthcare.

Always bring your NHS number with you to all hospital appointments or quote it if you need to telephone the hospital for any enquiries. This will allow staff to check that they have the right patient details by checking this against your NHS number.

To improve safety always check your NHS Number on correspondence the NHS sends to you.

Ways of finding out your NHS Number
If you do not know your NHS number, contact your GP or local Primary Care Trust. You may be asked for proof of identity, for example a passport or other form of identity this is to protect your privacy.

Once you have obtained your NHS Number write it down and Keep it Safe

My NHS Number

Data Protection
The Trust will endeavour to ensure that your information remains secure and confidential at all times. The Data Protection Act 1998 explains how personal information should be processed and this applies to all information whether held on paper or electronically on computer systems. We must ensure that all personal information is processed fairly, lawfully and as transparently as possible so that you:

- Understand the reasons for us processing your personal information
- Give your consent for the disclosure and use of information where necessary
- Gain trust in the way we handle your information
- Understand your rights regarding the right to request access about the information we hold about you.

The Caldicott Guardian, who is a senior health clinician, has the role to ensure we meet the highest standards for handling personal information at the Trust.

For further information regarding data protection, please read our leaflet called “Protecting Your Data - How we use your health records” or visit the Information Governance pages on the Trust website.
Patient Relations

The Patient Relations Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers. We will do our best to help you to resolve any concerns you may have about the care you received. We can also give you information on the services provided by the Trust.

If you have a concern or there is a problem, the best way to get it resolved is usually to tell someone there and then. On a ward, talk to the sister or charge nurse on duty. In a clinic, talk to the receptionist or one of the nursing staff. If you want to talk to a senior manager or to someone who has not been directly involved in your care and treatment, we can usually arrange this during office hours. You can also ask to speak to a member of the Patient Relations Department.

Staff in any ward or department will be able to contact a member of the team for you or you can telephone 01942 822376. The Patient Relations Department is open Monday to Friday between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm. Outside of these hours there is an answer-phone service.

If you wish to make a formal complaint you can telephone or write to:

The Patient Relations Manager
Wrightington Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan WN1 2NN
Telephone: 01942 822376

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information call 01942 773106.