Sickle Cell Disease

Know the facts! Understand the basics and how to manage Sickle Cell Disease

DC HEALTH
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

What is Sickle Cell Disease?

- **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)** is a lifelong inherited blood disorder where red blood cells become hard and the shape makes it sticky and causes blocking of the red blood flow which is a serious health issue. This causes pain, organ damage, and other serious health problems. It's a lifelong condition.

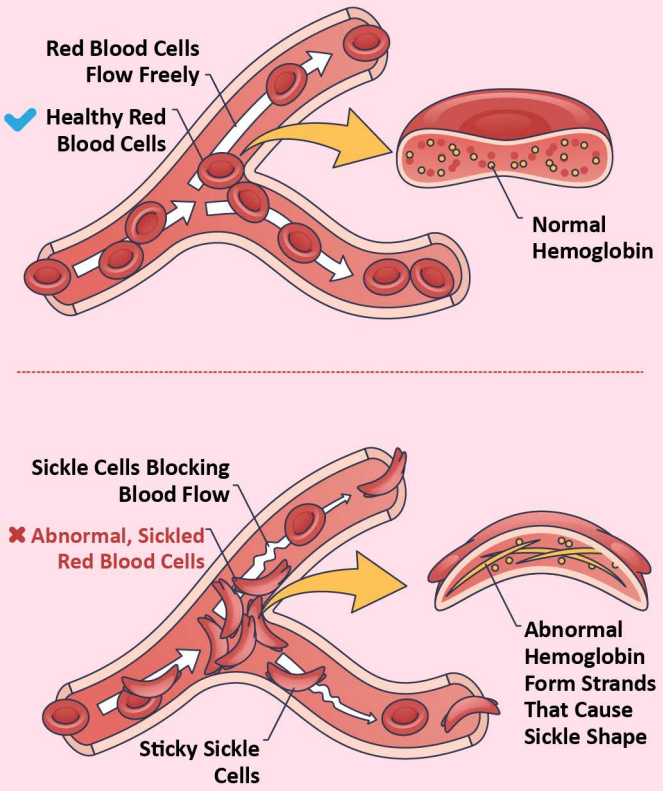
How to Know If I'm At Risk?

Both parents must carry the sickle cell gene for you to have SCD. It is passed down when both parents carry the sickle cell gene. This is a genetic disease that is tested at birth currently. Black/African, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Central/South American, South Asian descents are at hereditary risk.

What are the symptoms of Sickle Cell Disease?

- Pain episodes
- Breathing difficulty
- Stroke risk
- Swelling in hands/feet
- Fatigue

SICKLE CELL DISEASE



Sickle Cell Disease

Healthy Habits for a Better Life with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)

- **Exercise Regularly:** Stay active with at least 30 minutes of movement most days.
- **Drink Plenty of Water:** Aim for 6–8 glasses daily to stay hydrated and support body functions.
- **Eat a Healthy Diet:** Choose whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats.
- **Avoid Smoking & Quit Harmful Habits:** Say no to tobacco and let go of negativity or toxic thinking including drinking alcohol.
- **Get Consistent, Quality Sleep:** Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep every night to recharge your body and mind.
- **See Your Doctor Regularly:** Schedule routine check-ups and preventive screenings.

Common Treatments & Care Options for SCD

- **Routine Doctor Visits:** Regular check-ups help manage symptoms & prevent complications.
- **Stay Up to Date on Vaccinations:** Vaccines protect against infections that can be more serious for people with SCD.
- **Blood Transfusions:** Used to treat anemia and reduce the risk of stroke or organ damage.
- **Medications for Pain and Prevention:** Includes pain relievers, antibiotics to reduce symptoms and crises.
- **Bone Marrow or Stem Cell Transplant:** A possible cure for some individuals, usually younger patients with a match.
- **Gene Therapy (Emerging Treatment):** A variety of new therapy options currently being tested.

Resources

For tips and resources to help you build and maintain healthy habits, you can visit:

» **LivingWell DC:** Find tools to help you eat healthy, exercise, sleep well, visit the doctor, and quit smoking: livingwell.dc.gov/page/go-go-dc

» **Howard University Hospital (HUH):** provides testing, treatment, education, and counseling to adults and children with sickle cell disease at huhealthcare.com/health-services/sickle-cell-disease-center/

» **Comprehensive Sickle Cell Disease Program by Children's National Medical Center:** provides testing, treatment, education and counseling to infants and children with sickle cell disease at childrensnational.org/get-care/departments/sickle-cell-disease-program

» **Sickle Cell Association of the National Capital Area, Inc. (SCANCA, Inc.):** offers counseling, education, and support-group sessions for individuals with sickle cell disease, their families and friends at scancainc.org/

» **Center's for Disease Control and Prevention SCD Information:** Learn steps people with sickle cell disease can take to have better health at cdc.gov/sickle-cell/index.html