



Sickle Cell Disease

Sickle Cell Disease, the most common genetic blood disorder, affects about 100,000 people in the United States, with more than 90% of affected patients being African American. As an inherited condition, your risk depends entirely on your genetic traits, making it essential to know your family's health history.

Understanding Sickle Cell Disease

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a group of inherited red blood cell disorders. Red blood cells contain hemoglobin—a protein that carries oxygen. Healthy red blood cells are round, and move through small blood vessels to carry oxygen to all areas of the body.

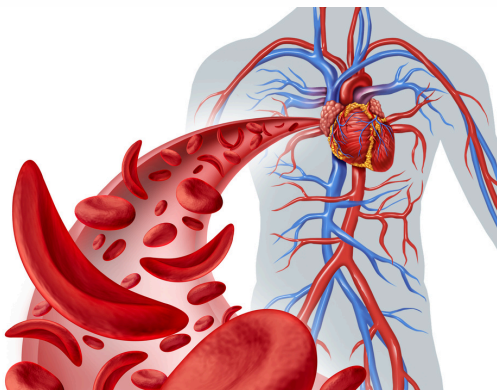
With SCD, red blood cells become hard and sticky, and abnormally shaped. The sickle cells die off early, causing a constant shortage of red blood cells. As they travel through small blood vessels, they get stuck and block blood flow, resulting serious and potentially fatal complications.

Why Are Minority Communities More At Risk?

- Historically, Black people are more likely to carry the sickle cell trait as it originally helped protect against malaria in Africa.
- SCD primarily affects people of color, drawing systemic underfunding and racial bias.
- In some global regions, the disease is incorrectly viewed as a spiritual curse or contagious condition.
- Medical prejudice fueled by racial bias, leading to mistreatment in healthcare.
- Fear of discrimination causes many to avoid or delay going to the hospital during painful crises.

What Can You Do?

- **Know your family medical history.** A hemoglobin electrophoresis blood test can confirm if you carry the sickle cell trait.
- **Get genetic counseling.** Speak with a genetic counselor to calculate the odds of passing SCD, or the trait, to a baby.
- **Do your research.** You know your body best.
- **Live healthy.** If living with SCD, eating healthy, staying hydrated, and prioritizing sleep can help you manage your condition.
- **Stay in the know** about recently approved gene therapies and new treatment possibilities to ask your doctor about.



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