



WHERE CAN YOU GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Your child's doctor
- Sickle cell care centers
- Blood doctors (hematologists)
- Sickle cell groups:
- **Sickle Cell Data Collection Program:**
[dshs.texas.gov/ environmental-epidemiology-disease-registries-section/sickle-cell-data-collection-program](https://dshs.texas.gov/environmental-epidemiology-disease-registries-section/sickle-cell-data-collection-program)
- **Sickle Cell Disease Association of America:**
sicklecelldisease.org
- **CDC:**
[cdc.gov/sickle-cell/ about/prevention-and-treatment.html](https://cdc.gov/sickle-cell/about/prevention-and-treatment.html)

NEWBORN SCREENING PROGRAM

Texas Department of State
Health Services
P.O. Box 149347 MC-1918
Austin, Texas 78714-9347

512-776-3957

dshs.texas.gov/newborn



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THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT

Sickle Cell Disease



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

WHAT IS SICKLE CELL DISEASE (SCD)?

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is an inherited blood disease. It can be very serious for babies, young children, and adults.

Red blood cells carry oxygen through the body. Inside these cells is a protein called hemoglobin.

In SCD, the red blood cells change shape. They look like a curved “sickle” instead of a round cell. These sickle cells are weak and stiff. They can get stuck in the blood vessels and block blood flow.

This can cause sudden, severe pain and block oxygen from getting to parts of the body. Over time, it can also harm the body’s tissues and organs like the brain, lungs, and kidneys.

WHAT PROBLEMS CAN SCD CAUSE?

People with SCD can have serious health problems.

Some life-threatening problems include:

- Blood infection (sepsis)
- Sudden enlargement of the spleen with anemia (acute splenic sequestration)
- Block in oxygen and blood flow to the lungs (acute chest syndrome)

Other problems can include:

- Pain attacks (crises)
- Repeat infections
- Low blood count (anemia)
- Fever
- Lung infection (pneumonia)
- Stroke
- Swelling in hands and feet
- Problems during pregnancy
- Painful erections in males

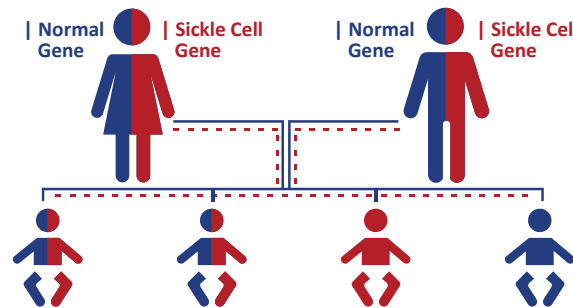
HOW DO PEOPLE GET SCD?

SCD is an inherited disease, which means children get SCD from their parents. Genes are instructions in our body. They control things like eye color and height.

Each child gets one gene from their mother and one from their father.

A parent with sickle cell trait has one normal gene and one sickle cell gene. If both parents have sickle cell trait, the following chances apply to every baby they have together.

- 1 in 4 chance the baby will have SCD
- 1 in 2 chance the baby will have sickle cell trait
- 1 in 4 chance the baby will have neither SCD nor sickle cell trait



The chances are the same with each pregnancy, regardless of whether a previous child has SCD, sickle cell trait, or neither.

Children may inherit different types of SCD, including:

- Sickle cell anemia (hemoglobin SS, Hb SS, SCD-SS)
- Hemoglobin SC (sickle hemoglobin C, Hb SC, SCD-SC)

HOW IS SCD TREATED?

Pain Care:

Medicine like acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) can help with pain. Rest, fluids, and a heating pad can also help. Most people with repeat pain attacks will eventually need stronger pain medicine like morphine.

Because the pain can be very severe, it is important that healthcare providers give the medicine as soon as possible and use the medicine that typically works for the specific person. If the pain does not get better, the patient may need care at a hospital.

Penicillin:

Young children may take penicillin every day. This medicine can help prevent serious blood infections in people with sickle cell disease.

Hydroxyurea:

This medicine helps the body make less sickle-shaped red blood cells so there is less chance of issues like pain attacks and strokes. It is usually taken daily and can come in a liquid for small children. It is important to talk to your hematologist (blood doctor) about this medication right away.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Take your child to regular doctor’s visits.
- A blood doctor (hematologist) helps care for people with SCD. It is important that your doctor knows how to treat people with SCD.
- Your child might need additional vaccines to help protect them from infections.
- Make sure your child rests and drinks plenty of fluids.
- Protect your child from very hot or very cold weather.

Get help right away if your child:

- Looks very pale
- Has no energy
- Has problems breathing
- Has a fever of 101.5° F or higher

People with SCD can live long and healthy lives with the right treatment. They can go to college, travel, and have their own children.