

## WHAT IS **SICKLE CELL TRAIT?**

The most important thing to know about having the Sickle Cell Trait (SCT) is that you could have a baby with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) if your partner also has an abnormal hemoglobin gene.

Having SCT means that a person carries a single gene for sickle cell disease and can pass this gene along to their children. People with SCT usually do not have any of the symptoms of SCD and live a normal life.

**IF BOTH PARENTS HAVE SCT, EACH CHILD THAT THEY HAVE TOGETHER HAS A:**

- 1 in 2 (50%) chance of having SCT. Children with SCT will not have symptoms of SCD, but they can pass SCT on to their children.
- 1 in 4 (25%) chance of having sickle cell anemia, one of several types of SCD. Sickle cell anemia is a serious medical condition.
- 1 in 4 (25%) chance that they will not have SCD or SCT.

## WHO CAN HAVE **SICKLE CELL DISEASE AND SICKLE CELL TRAIT?**

- It is estimated that SCD affects 90,000 to 100,000 people in the United States, mainly Blacks or African Americans.
- The disease occurs among about 1 of every 365 Black or African American births and among about 1 out of every 16,300 Hispanic American births.
- SCD affects millions of people throughout the world and is particularly common among those whose ancestors come from sub-Saharan Africa; regions in the Western Hemisphere (South America, the Caribbean, and Central America); Saudi Arabia; India; and Mediterranean countries such as Turkey, Greece, and Italy.

## GET IN TOUCH!

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Content Source:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## What is **SICKLE CELL DISEASE?**

Everything you need to know about Sickle Cell Disease, Sickle Cell Trait, and its complications.



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## WHAT IS **SICKLE CELL DISEASE**?

SCD is a group of inherited red blood cell disorders. Healthy red blood cells are round, and they move through small blood vessels to carry oxygen to all parts of the body. In someone who has SCD, the red blood cells become hard and sticky and look like a C-shaped farm tool called a “sickle”. The sickle cells die early, which causes a constant shortage of red blood cells. Also, when they travel through small blood vessels, they get stuck and clog the blood flow.

## WHAT CAUSES **SICKLE CELL DISEASE**?

SCD is a genetic condition that is present at birth. It is inherited when a child receives two sickle cell genes—one from each parent. It is inherited in the same way that people get the color of their eyes, skin, and hair. People cannot catch SCD from being around a person who has it.

## HOW IS **SICKLE CELL DISEASE** DIAGNOSED?

SCD is diagnosed with a simple blood test. It most often is found at birth during routine newborn screening tests at the hospital. In addition, SCD can be diagnosed before birth.

## WHAT ARE SOME **HEALTH PROBLEMS OF SICKLE CELL DISEASE**?

People with SCD start to have signs of the disease during the first year of life, usually around 5 months of age.

Symptoms and complications of SCD are different for each person and can range from mild to severe.

**There is no single best treatment for all people with SCD. Treatment options are different for each person depending on the symptoms.**

- **PAIN “EPISODE” OR “CRISIS”**

Sickle cells don’t move easily through small blood vessels and can get stuck and clog blood flow. This causes pain that can start suddenly, be mild to severe, and last for any length of time

- **INFECTION**

People with SCD, especially infants and children, are more likely to experience harmful infections such as flu, meningitis, and hepatitis.

- **STROKE**

Sickle cells can clog blood flow to the brain and cause a stroke. A stroke can result in lifelong disabilities and learning problems.

- **ANEMIA**

Sickle cells do not live as long as normal red blood cells. This causes anemia, or a low blood count. Anemia can cause weakness and fatigue.

- **ACUTE CHEST SYNDROME**

Blockage of the flow of blood to the lungs can cause acute chest syndrome. ACS is similar to pneumonia; symptoms include chest pain, coughing, difficulty breathing, and fever. It can be life threatening and should be treated in a hospital.

- **EYE DISEASE**

SCD can affect the blood vessels in the eye and lead to long term damage.

- **OTHER PROBLEMS INCLUDE:**

hand-foot syndrome, chest pain, trouble breathing, organ damage, gallstones, blood in urine, painful erections in men

## IS THERE A CURE FOR **SICKLE CELL DISEASE**?

To date, the only cure for SCD is a bone marrow or stem cell transplant, a procedure that takes healthy stem cells from a donor and puts them into someone whose bone marrow is not working properly. These healthy stem cells cause the bone marrow to make new healthy cells.