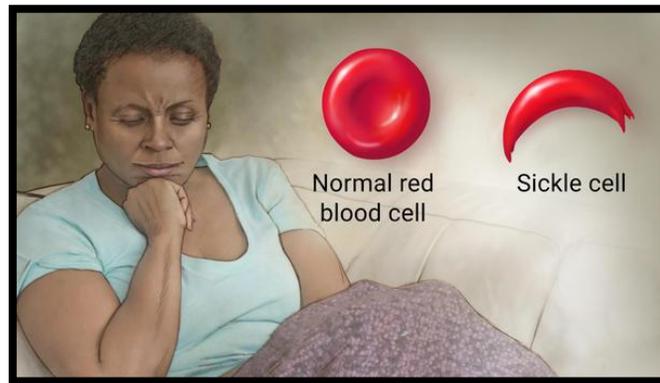


# Sickle Cell Awareness



Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is an assembly of inherited red blood cell disorders. People with SCD have abnormal hemoglobin, termed as hemoglobin S or sickle hemoglobin, in their red blood cells. Inherited means that the disease has been passed genetically from parents to their children. People who inherit one sickle cell gene and one normal gene have sickle cell trait (SCT). Those with SCT usually don't have any symptoms of sickle cell disease (SCD), but they carry the defective hemoglobin S gene and they pass the trait on to their children.

The exact number of people living in the United States (U.S.) with SCD is unknown. It is estimated that 90,000 to 100,000 people are affected. Most people with SCD are of African ancestry or come from Hispanic, southern European, Middle Eastern or Asian Indian backgrounds.

If a person has SCD, it is present at birth and disease related symptoms occur when they are about 5 or 6 months of age. Therefore, all newborn babies in the U.S., District of Columbia and other U.S. territories are screened after birth.

The signs and symptoms vary and can change over time and are related to the complications of the disease. Pain episodes termed as sickle cell or vaso-occlusive crises can occur without warning. The sickled cells block blood flow and decrease oxygen delivery causing pain anywhere in the body and in more than one spot at a time.

There are simple steps to help prevent and reduce the number of pain crises such as:

- Drinking plenty of water
- Try not to get too hot or cold
- Try to avoid places/situations that expose the SCD person to elevated altitudes or low oxygen levels

SCD is a life-long illness in which the severity of the disease varies from person to person. The life expectancy ranges from 40 to 60 years due to the advances in diagnosis and care. There is no widely available cure for SCD, however there are emerging new treatments currently being evaluated.

## Websites to View

[Fact Sheet](#)

[Sickle Cell Tool Kit](#)

[Sickle Cell Trait Fact Sheet](#)

[Sickle Cell Directory](#)