



Sickle Cell Anemia

Sickle Cell Anemia is a genetic disease. Genetic means that it is passed down from parent to child. Sickle Cell Anemia affects red blood cells that carry oxygen. These red blood cells contain a substance that is called hemoglobin. Hemoglobin carries oxygen to all of the cells of the body. In people with sickle cell anemia, the hemoglobin changes the shape of the red blood cells. Because of this change the red blood cells cannot carry enough oxygen to the cells.



These faulty red blood cells look like a sickle, which is a tool used to cut down very tall grass. Normal red blood cells (RBC) are round. Normal cells can move through small blood vessels to deliver needed oxygen. Sickle-shaped cells can not pass easily through the vessels. This causes the red blood cells to get clogged and break. They can not deliver their oxygen through the blood vessels to the body's organs and tissues. This lack of oxygen causes the symptoms of pain, anemia, fatigue, and swelling of the joints. It can even cause blockages of the spleen.

Sickle Cell Anemia is diagnosed with a simple blood test called hemoglobin electrophoresis. The red blood cells are looked at under a microscope and its shape is observed.

There are many resources available to the men, women, and children affected by Sickle Cell Anemia. Resources include:

- American Sickle Cell Anemia Association (ASCAA) found at <http://www.ascaa.org/default.asp> . ASCCA also has a forum on their site. Forums allow people affected by Sickle Cell Anemia to get online, chat about the positives and negatives pertaining to this disease. People often ask questions and other people whom have had the same experience answer. This sharing often helps people cope with disease.
- National Organization for Rare Disorders http://www.rarediseases.org/search/rdbdetail_abstract.html?disname=Sickle%20Cell%20Disease
- Cleveland Clinic http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/Sickle_Cell_Anemia/hic_Sickle_Cell_Disease.aspx ,
- Sickle Cell information Center <http://www.scinfo.org/>
- Starlight Children's Foundation <http://www.starlight.org/greatescapes/>
- CHAMPPS or Choosing, Health, Awareness, Mobility, Personal Power and Success, is a youth program for 10-17 year olds with sickle cell located at <http://www.ascaa.org/CHAMPPS.asp> . CHAMPPS is a youth program for peer to peer counseling.

Sickle Cell Anemia is a painful disease. If you or your loved one is affected by Sickle Cell Anemia take a moment and visit the links provided.

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