

LETS TALK ABOUT..

Sickle Cell

Information, Counselling
and Caring for those with
Sickle Cell Disorders
and their families

Charity Reg: 104 6631
Company Reg: 284 0865
www.sicklecellsociety.org

What is Sickle Cell disease?

- Sickle cell disorders are a group of illnesses which affect your red blood cells.
- Sickle cell is a genetic condition, which means it is passed on from your parents and you are born with it; you cannot catch it from other people^{1,2}.
- Sickle cell disorders causes your normally round and flexible blood cells to become stiff and sickle shaped, stopping the blood cells, and the oxygen they carry, from being able to move freely around the body and causing PAIN².
- In Britain it is most common in people of African or West Indian (Caribbean) descent, but it may also occur in people from India, Pakistan, the Middle East or the Eastern Mediterranean.



Normal red blood cells Sickled red blood cells

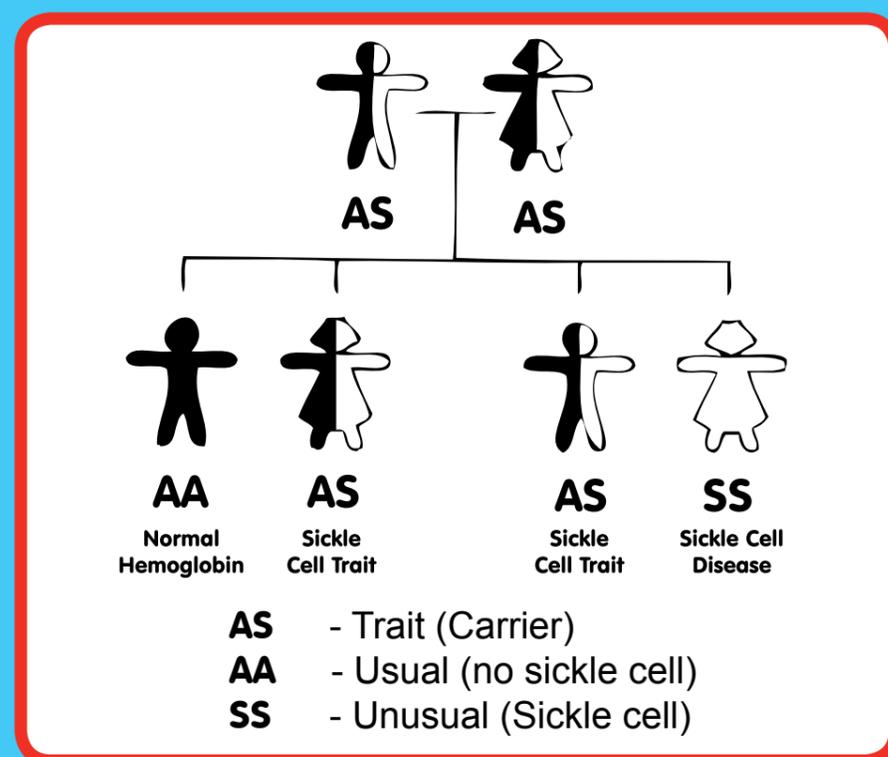
Symptoms of Sickle Cell

- **Chronic (long term) anaemia** - when there are not enough red blood cells or Hb in your body^{3,4}
- **Unpredictable Pain (crisis)** - When the blood vessels get blocked, it can cause pain and swelling in the area, also known as a crisis.
- **You may get tired easily or experience fatigue** - constant tiredness, feeling weak or lacking in energy because of the anaemia.
- **Jaundice** - yellowing of the whites of the eyes and skin.

To help prevent a crisis remember to stay healthy:

- **Eat healthy food.**
- **Exercise** - but not too much and remember to drink plenty when you are doing exercise or sports.
- **Rest and relax.**
- **Drink lots** (don't drink fizzy drinks too often).
- **Keep warm in cold weather**- you can still be trendy and dress warmly.
- **Keep cool in hot weather**- remember to drink extra water.

What is your Haemoglobin type?



Common causes of Pain (crisis):

Pain can happen for no reason but certain things can trigger (help cause) pain such as:^{1,5,6}

- **Exercise** - regular exercise is important but you should not get too tired. Taking regular short breaks can help.
- **Stress** - or stressful things like exams. Try talking to your family or friends if you are worried about anything.
- **Infections** - illness caused by bacteria or viruses. If you have sickle cell you are more likely to get some infections, and your doctor will ask you to take antibiotics everyday to help stop you being ill. You will also need extra immunisations including an annual flu immunisation.
- **Not drinking enough water (Dehydration)** - drinking lots of water when doing exercise or when it is very hot outside can help.
- **Sudden changes in body temperature** - particularly if it is very hot or cold outside.

For more information, or for the full reference list, visit the Sickle Cell Society's website:
www.sicklecellsociety.org, call us on 0208 9617795 or email: info@sicklecellsociety.org

Alternatively you can Visit the NHS Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screening Programme's website: <http://sct.screening.nhs.uk/>