Facts About:
Sickle Cell Disease

What is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is an inherited blood disorder affecting red blood cells. People with SCD have red blood cells containing an abnormal type of hemoglobin. Instead of being round shaped, red blood cells can become crescent or sickle shaped and have difficulty passing through the body's small blood vessels. The cells may block the normal circulation to joints and organs in the body, leading to severe pain (referred to as a "pain crisis") and untreated, could lead to stroke, life-threatening infections, and even death.

What Causes Sickle Cell Disease?

A child gets Sickle Cell Disease when they receive Sickle Cell genes from each parent. You can diagnose SCD with a simple blood test. In the United States, it most often is found at birth during routine newborn screening tests at the hospital. In addition, SCD can be diagnosed while the baby is in the womb using diagnostic tests.

Because children with SCD are at an increased risk of infection and other health problems, early diagnosis and treatment are important.

Who is affected by Sickle Cell Disease?

This chronic disease is most common among individuals of African descent, occurring in approximately 1 in 365 Black or African-American births. The second most affected group are Hispanic/Latino Americans with 1 in 16,000 babies born with Sickle Cell.

How Blood Donors Can Help

People with Sickle Cell Disease often need **blood transfusions** throughout their life. A blood transfusion can help prevent a stroke and help when a SCD patient is experiencing anemia (low blood oxygen levels). For many of these patients, blood transfusions are a lifeline that allow them to live a normal and healthy life.

Carefully matched blood is required for patients receiving frequent transfusions. Although blood matches can be found in donors of any ancestral background, **1 in 3 African-Americans are a match for a Sickle Cell patient!**

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