



## What is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle Cell Disease is the name for a group of inherited conditions that affect the red blood cells. The most serious type is called sickle cell anaemia. Sickle haemoglobin (red blood cells) become distorted when oxygen leaves them, this creates a red blood cell that is the shape of a crescent instead of the usual smooth, disk shape. This can then lead to cells sticking together and not moving through the blood vessels. These blockages can cause pain (sickle cell crisis). Sickle Cell disease affects 1 in every 2000 births in England. High-Risk Ethnic Groups include African or African-Caribbean.

## What are the symptoms?

- Sickle Cell Crisis, painful episodes that can last for days or weeks.
- More prone to serious infections
- Anaemia
- Tiredness
- Shortness of Breath

## What are the causes?

Sickle Cell is inherited; it is caused by a change in the genes that help produce Haemoglobin. Both parents must have the gene for it to affect the child.

## What about treatment?

- Drinking plenty of fluids and staying warm to reduce painful episodes.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eating food rich in folic acid and calcium.
- Using paracetamol or ibuprofen when treating crises from home.
- Daily antibiotics and having regular vaccinations.
- Regular blood transfusions can be used in cases where your symptoms are continuing or getting worse.
- Emergency blood transfusions in cases of severe anaemia.
- Medications such as Hydroxycarbamide, this can reduce sickling which can prevent crisis developing.

## SELF CARE TIPS

### DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

If you have sickle cell diseases, especially sickle cell anaemia being dehydrated can bring on a sickle cell crisis as red blood cells begin sticking together.

### WEAR WARM CLOTHES AND AVOID EXTREME TEMPERATURE CHANGES

Both the cold and also extreme temperature changes e.g. going into a cold swimming pool can be triggers for sickle cell crisis.

### USE HEAT TO SOOTHE PAIN DURING CRISIS

Items such as heated blankets and other devices can really help with pain when applied to location of it.

### ENSURE YOU ARE UP TO DATE ON YOUR VACCINATIONS

Those with sickle cell disease are more vulnerable to infection so protecting yourself through vaccinations can reduce risk in this area.

**To register with Bromley Well:  
Freephone 0808 278 7898  
Or register online:  
[www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer](http://www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer)**

**Contact Lifestyle Support direct  
07985 431484 / 07985 444210  
or email  
[enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk)**



### FURTHER RESOURCES

#### Sickle Cell Society

**Help Line: 0780 973 6089  
(Available Monday–  
Wednesday)**

National charity that supports and advocates for those with Sickle Cell Disease. They have information on a wide range of topics for all age groups, covering things such as treatments, breaking barriers and new research. They also run specific children activities.

#### Let's Keep Talking

Website created to support you in working with your Healthcare Team. There is lots of information on here to empower you to manage your condition.

#### NHS Conditions Sickle Cell

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of Sickle Cell disease. It also includes information about recovery from stroke and about the rehabilitation services you might be entitled to.

**References:** NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sickle-cell-disease/> NICE <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/sickle-cell-disease/>

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