SICKLE CELL DISEASE
Fact Sheet

Cook County Dept. of Public Health | BUILDING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

90%

90% of Americans with sickle cell disease are of African descent.

Source: CDC

Early Sickle Cell Disease detection and treatment is critical for managing your health and planning your family.

What is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle cell disease is a group of inherited blood disorders that cause serious health complications, including severe pain, stroke, heart disease, kidney disease, lung disease and loss of vision. **Sickle cell anemia**, the most severe form of sickle cell disease, causes anemia, painful crises, organ damage and childhood stroke. A lifelong illness, sickle cell disease is more common in African Americans.

What Causes Sickle Cell Disease?

A genetic mutation in hemoglobin, the protein that carries oxygen through the body, causes sickle cell disease. The abnormal hemoglobin causes red blood cells to become sickle-shaped, hard, and sticky, leading to blockages of blood vessels.

The Importance of Genetic Screening and Testing

Genetic screening can evaluate your risk of developing sickle cell disease, while genetic tests can identify the disorder. Prenatal screening can occur as early as 8 to 10 weeks into pregnancy. Newborn screening is conducted within 48 hours of a baby's birth.

Tips for Managing Sickle Cell Disease

- Arrange regular visits with a health care provider experienced in sickle cell disease to prevent complications.
- Seek mental health support and counseling to cope with emotional challenges related to the disease.
- Get recommended vaccinations and preventive antibiotics to protect against life-threatening infections, especially in children with sickle cell disease.

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