

Sickle Cell Disease

FAMILY FACT SHEET POSITIVE NEWBORN SCREEN

What is a positive newborn screen?

Newborn screening is done on tiny samples of blood taken from your baby's heel 24 to 48 hours after birth. Newborn screening tests for rare, hidden disorders that may affect your baby's health and development. The newborn screen suggests your baby likely has a disorder called sickle cell disease.

A positive newborn screen means your baby likely has sickle cell disease and needs more testing to know for sure.

Your baby's doctor will help arrange for more testing with specialists in sickle cell disease.

What is sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease affects the red blood cells so they can't carry as much oxygen to the body. In sickle cell disease, the red blood cells are sickle (banana) shaped instead of round (donut) shaped.

The sickled red blood cells can get trapped in the blood vessels and block blood flow. This can be painful and cause health problems.

Sickle cell disease is a disorder that is passed on, or inherited, from a child's mother and father. Because sickle cell disease is a genetic disease, family members are at risk of having sickle cell disease too, even if no one in the family has had it before.

What problems can sickle cell disease cause?

Sickle cell disease is different for each child. Some children with sickle cell disease have only a few health problems, while other children may have serious complications.

If sickle cell disease is not treated, a child might develop:

- Infections
- Stroke
- Drop in red blood cell count (anemia)
- Painful crises
- Enlarged spleen

It is important to follow the doctor's instructions for testing and treatment.

What is the treatment for sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease can be treated. Treatments for children with sickle cell disease can include:

- Antibiotics to prevent infection
- Medications for pain
- Immunizations

Children with sickle cell disease should see their regular doctor and a doctor who specializes in sickle cell disease.

Children with sickle cell disease can benefit from prompt and careful treatment.

Resources for Parents

National Sickle Cell Disease Association
www.sicklecelldisease.org

Sickle Cell Disease Advocates of Minnesota
www.scdam.org

MN Children & Youth with Special Health Needs
(651) 201-3650 or (800) 728-5420

MN Newborn Screening Program
www.health.state.mn.us/newbornscreening

