

What Health Problems Does Sickle Cell Disease Cause?

Some of the most common complications of SCD include:

“Pain Episode” or “Crisis”: Sickle cells don’t move easily through small blood vessels and can get stuck and clog blood flow. This causes pain that can start suddenly, be mild to severe, and last for any length of time.

Infection: People with SCD, especially infants and children, are more likely to experience harmful infections such as flu, meningitis, and hepatitis.

Hand-Foot Syndrome: Swelling in the hands and feet, often along with a fever, is caused by the sickle cells getting stuck in the blood vessels and blocking the blood from flowing freely through the hands and feet, usually seen in children.

Eye Disease: SCD can affect the blood vessels in the eye and lead to long term damage.

Acute Chest Syndrome (ACS): Blockage of the flow of blood to the lungs can cause acute chest syndrome. ACS is similar to pneumonia; symptoms include chest pain, coughing, difficulty breathing, and fever. It can be life threatening and should be treated in a hospital.

Stroke: Sickle cells can clog blood flow to the brain and cause a stroke. A stroke can result in lifelong disabilities and learning problems.



Piedmont Health Services
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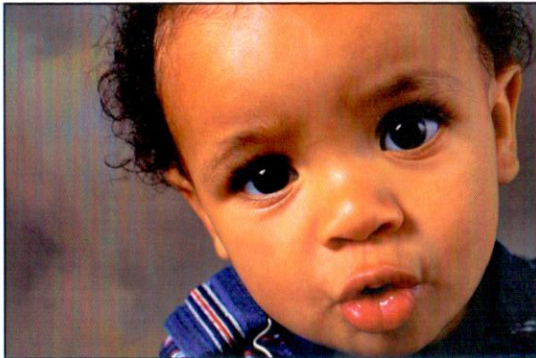
Mecklenburg County



**Your Partner in
Community Health**

Our Mission:

Piedmont Health Services and Sickle Cell Agency (PHSSCA) provides outreach, education, screening and case management for people with high-risk health problems; focusing on sickle cell services, HIV/AIDS prevention and diabetes.



In Mecklenburg County, Piedmont Health Services and Sickle Cell Agency provides care coordination to over 700 patients and provides sickle cell education, genetic counseling and testing to the general public.



**Piedmont Health Services
and Sickle Cell Agency**

What You Should Know About Sickle Cell Disease

What Is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is a group of inherited red blood cell disorders.

- Healthy red blood cells are round and they move through small blood vessels carrying oxygen to all parts of the body.
- In SCD, the red blood cells become hard and sticky and look like a C-shaped farm tool called a “sickle.”
- Sickle cells die early, which causes a constant shortage of red blood cells.
- Sickle cells can get stuck in small blood vessels and block the flow of blood and oxygen to organs in the body. These blockages cause repeated episodes of severe pain, organ damage, serious infections or even stroke.

What Is Sickle Cell Trait?

Sickle cell trait (SCT) is not a disease, but having it means that a person has inherited the sickle cell gene from one of his or her parents. People with SCT usually do not have any of the symptoms of sickle cell disease (SCD) and live a normal life. However, if two people with Sickle Cell Trait have a child, there is a one-in-four chance that the child will be born with Sickle Cell Disease.

What Causes Sickle Cell Disease?

SCD is inherited in the same way that people get the color of their eyes, skin and hair.

- A person with SCD is born with it.
- People cannot catch SCD from being around a person who has it.



Who Is Affected By Sickle Cell Disease?

SCD affects all races and ethnic groups. In North Carolina, SCD occurs in approximately 1 out of every 360 Black or African American births, and one out of every 10,800 Hispanic-American births. Other known ethnicities who are affected are those from Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Mediterranean countries such as Turkey, Greece, and Italy.

