

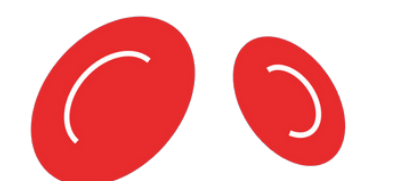
SICKLE CELL DISORDER

From the Sickle Cell Society

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FACTS

Sickle cell disorder (SCD) is the most common genetic blood condition in the UK, affecting approximately 17,500 people.

Did You Know?



Normal red blood cells



Sickled red blood cells

- The main symptoms of sickle cell disorder (SCD) are **chronic anaemia** and episodes of **severe pain**.
- This is because, instead of being round, the condition creates sickle, or crescent moon shaped red blood cells which stick together, causing dangerous blockages in the small blood vessels, leading to the intense pain.
- Episodes of pain are generally referred to as a **crisis**, and require strong painkillers and often a hospital stay. They can be fatal.

- **SCD** is inherited from both parents. **Sickle cell trait** is inherited from one parent, and does not have the symptoms of the full disorder.
- SCD can affect anyone of any background or skin colour, although in the UK it predominantly affects people from African and Caribbean backgrounds.
- Cold, damp weather conditions, dehydration and intense physical activity can all bring on a crisis.
- The chronic anaemia leads to extreme tiredness that can have a **huge effect on daily activities, work and study**.





- People with sickle cell are at risk of complications such as **stroke, acute chest syndrome, blindness, bone damage** and **priapism** (a medical emergency from a persistent, painful erection of the penis).
- Children **aged 2-16** with SCD are at **increased risk for stroke**.
- Approximately 1 in 76 babies born in the UK carry sickle cell trait.
- Almost 300 babies are born in the UK with full sickle cell disorder each year.
- **A simple blood test** will tell whether you have sickle cell trait or the full disorder.



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- SCD can cause **damage to organs** such as the liver, kidney, eyes, lungs, heart and spleen. **Death can also result** from complications of the disorder.
- People living with the condition require specialist healthcare. Blood transfusions are often required.
- The only possible cure options are gene therapy or a bone marrow transplant but these are long and complicated treatments that are only possible for a limited number of affected individuals.
- People carrying the trait have protection against malaria infection. However, people with the full blown disorder are more at risk when exposed to malaria.

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