Weill Cornell Medicine

Sickle Cell Disease

What You Need to Know

What is it?

- **Sickle cell disease (SCD) is an inherited condition that affects the red blood cells.**
- **Healthy red blood cells are soft and round,** traveling easily through blood vessels to deliver oxygen throughout the body.
- When a person has SCD, their red blood cells are **shaped like the letter "C" and are sticky and hard.**
- **Sickle cells can become stuck in blood vessels and they have a shorter lifespan than healthy cells,** causing a shortage of red blood cells in the body.

SICKLED RED BLOOD CELL

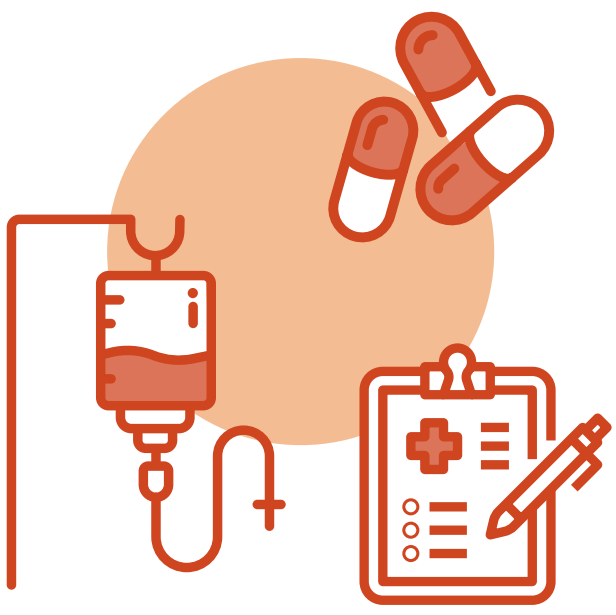
NORMAL RED BLOOD CELL

How is it diagnosed?

- Doctors usually diagnose SCD with a **blood test during newborn screenings.**
- Signs begin to occur during a **baby's first year.**
- Symptoms and complications vary greatly, **including pain, stroke and vision loss.**

How is SCD treated?

- Treatments, ranging from **blood transfusions to pain medications,** depend on the SCD type and symptoms.
- **A bone marrow or stem cell transplant is the only FDA-approved therapy that may be a cure for SCD.** This high-risk procedure requires the donor's bone marrow to match very closely with that of the recipient.



What is the life expectancy of a person with SCD?

- Depending on the type and severity of disease, **patients can live to be 40 to 70 years old.**

To learn more about the latest treatments for SCD, visit **weillcornell.org/services/hematology-and-oncology**

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