

Sickle Cell Disease

It is estimated that sickle cell disease affects approximately 100,000 Americans.

1 Introduction

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects the red blood cells in the body. Healthy red blood cells are disc-shaped and flexible to easily travel through the blood vessels. In this disease, the red blood cells contain an abnormal type of hemoglobin causing them to become sickle-shaped. These cells are stiff and sticky and can easily block blood flow to different parts of the body. Tissue that does not receive enough blood flow eventually becomes damaged, which leads to the complication associated with sickle cell disease.

2 Types

Abnormal hemoglobin, called hemoglobin S, is the cause of sickle cell. The most common types of sickle cell disease include the following:

- Hemoglobin SS
- Hemoglobin SC
- Sickle Beta-Plus Thalassemia
- Sickle Beta-Zero Thalassemia

3 Symptoms

Signs and symptoms typically appear at around 5 months of age. They tend to vary from person to person and can change over time ranging from mild to severe. Some possible symptoms to look for are:

- Anemia
- Episodes of pain
- Swelling of hands and feet
- Frequent infections
- Delayed growth or puberty
- Vision problems

4 Complications

Sickle cell disease worsens over time, but there are treatments available that can prevent complications and lengthen the life of those with this condition. Some serious complications caused by this disease include:

- Stroke
- Acute chest syndrome
- Pulmonary hypertension
- Organ damage
- Blindness

Treatment options can differ for each person, depending on their symptoms and severity. After early diagnosis, physicians will be able to recommend the proper medicines or transfusions to manage complications.

Did you know?

Sickle cell disease occurs more often among people from parts of the world where malaria is or was common.

For more information on sickle cell disease and supportive resources, please visit www.sicklecelldisease.org

References:

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/sickle-cell-disease>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sickle-cell/data.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/disease-s-conditions/sickle-cell-anemia/symptoms-causes/syc-20355876>

<https://www.sicklecelldisease.org/sickle-cell-health-and-disease/types/>