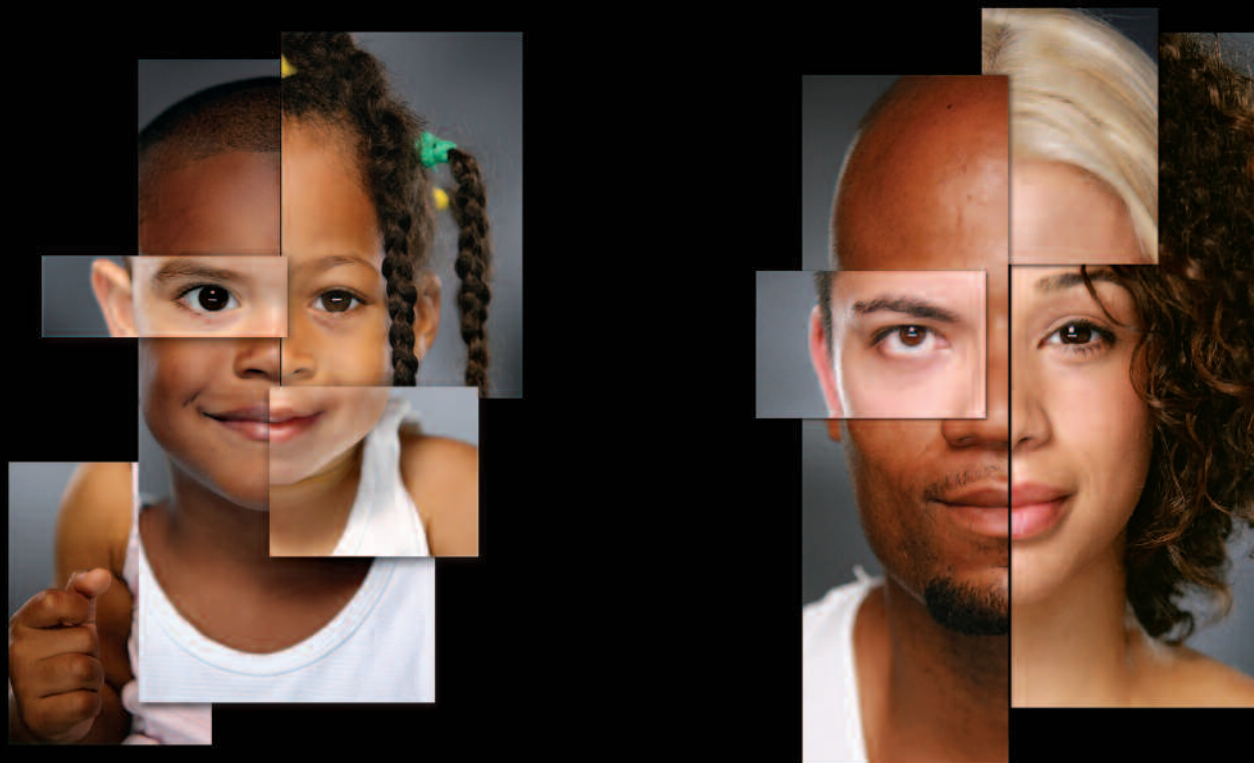


Sickle cell disease affects us all.
So why don't we know more about it?
It's time to face the facts.
So we can fight the disease.

face sickle cell



face sickle cell

what everyone
should know about
sickle cell disease

face facts:

Sickle cell disease affects almost all races.

It especially affects people with ancestors from Africa, India, Central and South America, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Mediterranean nations like Italy, Greece, France and Turkey.

Sickle cell disease is not contagious.

It's hereditary like hair or eye color. You can only get it if both of your parents carry a certain gene trait and pass it on to you. If you're not born with it, you can't get it later in life.

face facts.



face facts:

Sickle cell disease affects red blood cells.

It makes them hard and "sickle" shaped instead of soft and round. As a result, your blood has difficulty flowing smoothly and carrying oxygen to the rest of the body.

Sickle cell disease is a very serious disease.

It can be life threatening. It can lead to anemia (a shortage of red blood cells), causing fatigue and possibly damage to blood vessels and vital organs. And it often causes severe pain that can last for hours or days.

face facts.



face facts:

Millions of people have sickle cell trait.

Sickle cell trait is not a disease and you usually don't feel sick. But it means you carry one sickle gene and that it's possible for you to pass sickle cell disease to your child.

It's important to know if you have sickle cell trait.

If you and a partner both have trait and you have a baby, there's a 25% chance your baby will have sickle cell disease. There is a simple blood test to find out if you have trait.

face facts.



what is sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease is the most common genetic blood disease in the country. But most people know far too little about it. If we're going to be better at treating it and living with it, we have to be better at understanding it. We have to face the facts if we're going to fight the disease.

It's a serious, chronic blood disease. Normal red blood cells are soft and round and flow through the body carrying oxygen to vital organs. But if you have sickle cell disease, your red blood cells can become hard and sickle-shaped. They have trouble traveling through blood vessels and may even clog. As a result, organs and tissue can be deprived of their oxygen, leading to damage to the organs and even stroke. Also, these red blood cells can rupture more quickly and lead to anemia (low red blood cell count), making you feel tired and weak.



The most notable symptom is recurrent pain episodes which can be so severe they interfere with your life. Doctors cannot yet tell which symptoms a child born with sickle cell disease will have, when they will start, or how serious they will be. But most people with sickle cell disease have a constant risk of a life-threatening episode and need some form of treatment throughout life.

Treating it. There is no cure for sickle cell disease, but it can be treated. Some treatments include:

- Pain medication and antibiotics
- Rest, good nutrition, high fluid intake and supplementation with folic acid
- Blood transfusions
- Experimental drugs such as hydroxyurea and nitric oxide

who has sickle cell disease?

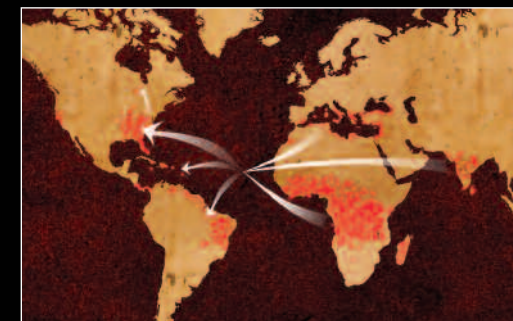
A cure in sight? In a limited number of cases, bone marrow and stem cell transplants have actually cured the disease. While it's a promising development, very few people are eligible for such risky procedures which require extensive, ongoing surgeries. Research in gene therapy is currently underway and may hold the most hope for, not only more effective treatments, but also a universal cure.

It's not contagious. Sickle cell disease is genetic. You're born with it if both of your parents have a certain gene trait (S, C, D, E, Beta-Thalassemia, etc.) and pass it on to you. You can't catch it later in life by contact or through blood transfusions.

Sickle cell affects many races. It's interesting to note that people who carry a sickle gene are more resistant to the disease malaria. In fact, sickle cell disease originated in regions where malaria is prevalent, like Africa, the Middle East,

the Mediterranean, South America and India. As these different races of people moved around the world, sickle cell disease moved with them. Today, sickle cell disease can be found all over the world, with the greatest incidence among people with ancestors from Africa.

In the U.S., it is estimated that over 70,000 people have sickle cell disease. And roughly 1,000 babies are born with the disease each year.

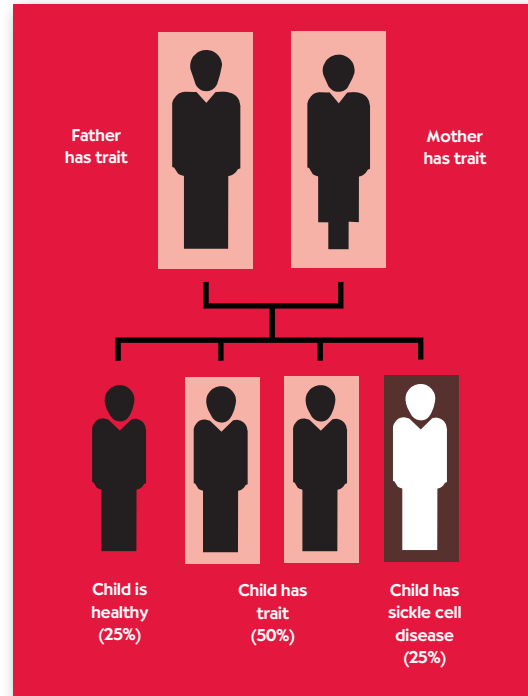


Sickle cell disease originated in Africa, South Asia and the Mediterranean and traveled to the Americas.

what is sickle cell trait?

It's not a disease. Millions of people have sickle cell trait, including almost 10% of African Americans. Having trait means you carry only one sickle gene and do not have the disease. Sickle cell trait will not turn into the disease later in life and usually you won't feel sick. However, it is possible that you can exhibit symptoms of the disease under extreme conditions of physical stress or low oxygen levels. In some cases, people with trait have gotten very sick or even died during rigorous exercise or sports. There are precautions you can take to avoid this, so be sure to speak with your health care provider about risk factors.

It's in your genes. It's possible to have trait and not know it. If someone in your family has trait or disease, you might have it, too. And that means you can pass trait or disease on to your children, as well. This is why it's very important to know your "sickle status."



If you and your partner have trait, there's a chance you could pass the disease on to your children.

what can I do?

Know your status. The easiest way to find out if you have sickle cell trait or disease is to take a simple blood test. This test is available in many hospitals, clinics and health centers. Talk to your health care provider or call the info line below to find out more. And make sure your partner knows about sickle cell trait and testing options, as well.

Know your options. If you have trait, it's important that you talk to your health care provider to find out what you can do to protect your health. If you and your partner both have sickle cell trait and you wish to have a baby, a health care provider can tell you about your options. You may wish to speak with a genetic counselor, who can help determine your risks for having a child with sickle cell disease.

Know your risks. If you have sickle cell disease but aren't under a doctor's care, it's critical that you speak with a medical professional so you can

learn about the treatment options available to you. You should also be aware of situations that can lead to a sickle cell episode. These situations include infections, stressful environments at home and in the workplace, dehydration, sudden temperature variations and overexertion.

Spread the knowledge. No matter who you are, you can help fight sickle cell by knowing the facts and passing them on. Talk about sickle cell disease and trait with your children, your parents, your teachers, your students, your health care providers, your patients and your friends. The best way to fight sickle cell disease is to get the facts and spread the knowledge.

To learn more and to find health resources in your area, call the CT Info Line:

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