Sickle Cell Disease

Tips for Healthy Living

If you have sickle cell disease, you can live a full life and enjoy the things that most other people do. These tips will help you stay as healthy as possible.

Checklist

Good Health Care
✓ Work closely with your doctor to develop your own unique care plan.
✓ Build relationships with a hematologist and a team of other specialists so they are available for you when needed.

Healthy Lifestyle
✓ Stay active.
✓ Drink 8–10 glasses of water daily.
✓ Follow a heart-healthy eating plan that includes limiting alcohol.
✓ Aim for 7–8 hours of sleep a night.

Prevent Infections
✓ Children under 5 years old should take penicillin regularly.
✓ Adults and children should get scheduled vaccines, including flu shots.
✓ Wash hands often.

Topics to Discuss with Your Doctor

Pain Control
✓ How has your pain been since your last visit?
✓ What do you do to control pain?
Treatment Options
✓ Can hydroxyurea help? Are there side effects?
✓ Do you need blood transfusions?
✓ What lifestyle changes can you make to better manage your symptoms?

Emotional and Social Support
✓ Are there people you can talk to or groups you can join?
✓ How can you address any fears, worries, or stresses you may be having?

Emergency Guide
When to Seek Help
It is important to have a plan to get help quickly if there is a problem. Make sure the care facility you choose can obtain your health records, or keep a copy that you can bring.

Call 9-1-1 or seek emergency care right away for:
✓ Fever above 101°F
✓ Difficulty breathing
✓ Chest pain
✓ Abdominal (belly) swelling
✓ Sudden vision problems
✓ Severe headache
✓ Sudden weakness or loss of feeling and movement
✓ Seizure
✓ Painful erection of the penis that lasts more than 4 hours
✓ Pain anywhere in the body that will not go away with treatment